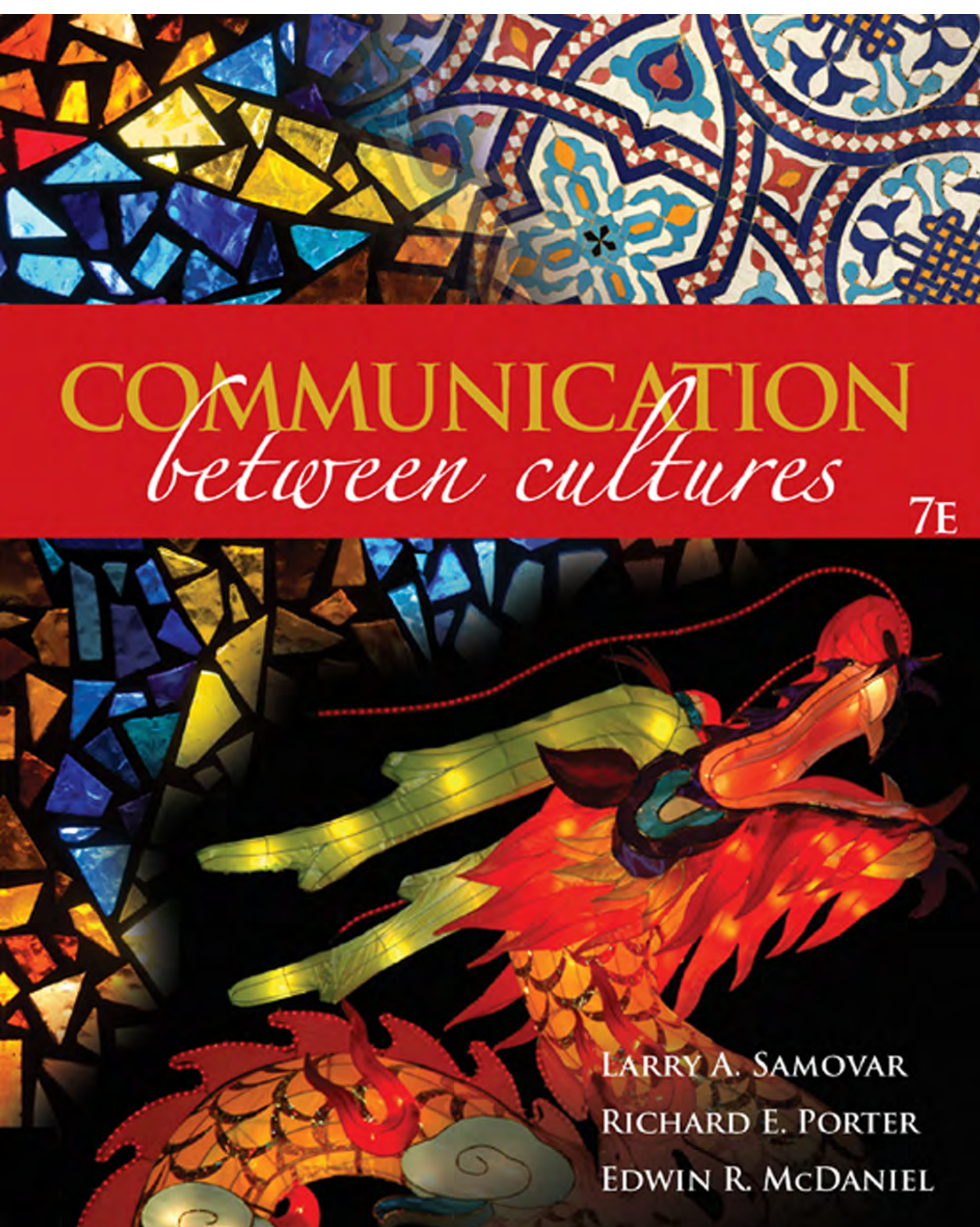
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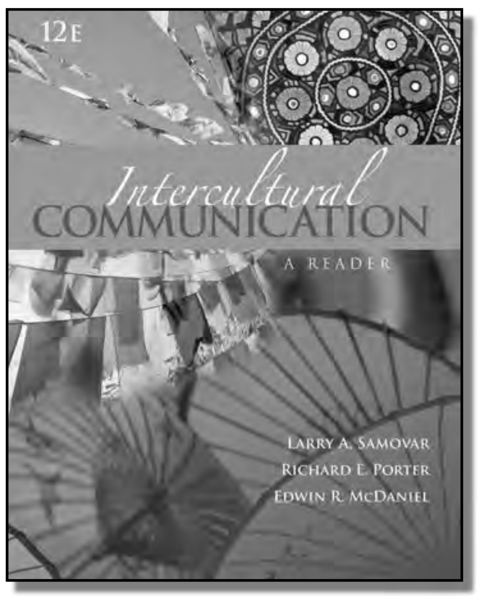

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SEVENTH EDITION

Communication Between CULTURES

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Preface

If one finger is sore, the whole hand will hurt.

CHINESE PROVERB

Our lives are all different and yet the same.

ANNE FRANK

We approached the occasion of a seventh edition with three very different reactions: pleasure, excitement, and caution. Our pleasure was great when we realized that our previous efforts were successful enough to warrant this new edition. It means that during the last thirty-eight years, our message regarding the importance of intercultural communication appears to have had merit—and an audience. Our excitement centered on the realization that we were once again going to be able to tinker with what we had done in six earlier editions. We knew, however, that we needed to be cautious and prudent when advancing additional perspectives and material. We did not want to abandon the orientation that contributed to the book's popularity. We believe that we have been able to fuse the past, present, and future of intercultural communication into this new edition. We have retained the core of the field, added current thinking and research, and staked out some new territory.

This book is still about the unique relationship between communication and culture. More specifically, it is about what happens when people from different cultures come together to share ideas, feelings, and information. Knowing that communication and culture work in tandem, we have tried to incorporate the basic principles from both topics throughout this book. Intercultural interaction is a daily occurrence for a growing number of people, so we have designed this text for individuals whose professional or private life brings them into contact with people from cultures or co-cultures different from their own. We, therefore, treat communication between international cultures as well as communication between domestic co-cultures in the United States.

Rationale

Worldwide interest in intercultural communication grows out of two interrelated premises. First, you live in an age when changes in technology, travel, economic and political systems, immigration patterns, and population density have created a world in which you may regularly interact with people from different cultures. Whether or not you welcome those changes, they will continue to grow in both frequency and intensity. Huston Smith said much the same thing when, in *The World's Religions*, he wrote,

"When historians look back on [the twentieth] century they may remember it most, not for space travel or the release of nuclear energy, but as the time when the peoples of the world first came to take one another seriously." Second, people are now sensitive to the truism that culture affects communication in subtle and profound ways. Your cultural background and experiences help determine how the world appears to you and how you interact with that world.

Approach

Fundamental to our approach is the belief that all forms of human communication involve action. Put in slightly different terms, communication is an activity that affects you as well as the recipients of your actions. Whether you are generating or receiving words or movements, you are creating and producing messages that are received and responded to by other people. Any study of communication must include information about the choices you make in selecting your messages, as well as a discussion of the consequences of those choices. Hence, this book takes the view that engaging in intercultural communication is pragmatic (you do something), philosophical (you make choices), and ethical (your selected actions have a consequence).

Philosophy

A dual philosophy has guided us in the preparation of this book. First, it is to the advantage of the nearly seven billion of us who share the planet's limited resources to improve our intercultural communication skills. The world has grown so small that now we must all depend on each other—whether we want to or not. As simplistic as it sounds, what happens in one place in the world now can affect people in many, many other places. Second, many of the obstacles to understanding can be reduced by motivation, knowledge, and an appreciation of cultural diversity. We hope to supply you with all three. Culture and communication, we have come to believe, involve personal matters, and as scholars, we have developed a mutual philosophy about intercultural interaction. It is our contention that the first commandment of any civilized society must be: *Allow people to be different as long as those dissimilarities do not create hardships for others*. At times, you will observe that we have openly stated our own positions, and we make no apologies for them. We have also made a conscious effort to hold our own ethnocentrism in check, but for those instances in which it has accidentally surfaced, we apologize.

New Features

The seventh edition of *Communication Between Cultures* brings a number of significant changes and a host of new features. We should point out that some of the new content has been guided by the excellent feedback provided by our readers and reviewers. For example, a number of reviewers suggested two major changes for the seventh edition, and we have incorporated them both. First, they recommended that the material on stereotypes, prejudice, racism, and ethnocentrism be moved from the last chapter of the book to a much earlier chapter. Hence, we updated the material on those four key

concepts and moved them from Chapter 11 to Chapter 4, where we examine them as part of our discussion of how a misguided and overzealous cultural identity can create problems. Second, some of the reviewers asked that we expand our treatment of interpersonal communication. We have responded to that suggestion by complementing what we already had in Chapter 1 with a more detailed analysis of the basic components of interpersonal communication. There are, of course, many other alterations that are worth noting.

- The first change you might detect is a visual one. We have included interactive prompts in the form of "boxes" scattered throughout the book. The purpose of these interactive boxes is to engage the readers, and we have provided three kinds of boxes. Boxes marked "Remember This" highlight an important point within the chapter and ask readers to pause for a moment and carefully think about the concept highlighted in the box. Boxes with the heading "Imagine This" offer intercultural scenarios intended to call readers' attention to an intercultural communication problem involving people from two or more different cultures. The third series of boxes, called "Consider This," is intended to present an idea or issue that raises a question for readers to answer.
- Since the publication of our last edition, the influence of globalization on the world community has greatly increased, and it now affects a variety of contexts and a large number of institutions. Therefore, we begin Chapter 1 with an examination of how globalization is creating more and more intercultural interactions across an array of different contexts, which in turn are provoking an increased requirement for intercultural communication skills. Later in the book, we look at the impact of globalization on the family, the business arena, education, and the health care setting.
- Because of India's large population and new prominence as an economic superpower, we have added the topic of Indian history to Chapter 2. It is in this chapter that we look at the link between history, perception, and communication.
- Our treatment of the influence of information technology and mass media has been greatly expanded. In Chapter 4, we look at how cyber or fantasy identities can influence communication. Later we also examine how technology and media are altering family structures throughout the world.
- It is apparent that the topic of religion and worldview is an important one in today's world. Because of its importance, we have made some significant additions to the chapter on religion. For each of the six religious traditions examined, we added a discussion of that tradition's notions about death and/or the afterlife. Our rationale was a simple one: the way people conceive of death and an afterlife influences how they behave in this life. We also added material on spirituality and humanism. While these two worldviews are not traditional "religions," each holds sway over how millions of people see the world and take part in that world. Finally, because of all the attention and confusion surrounding Islam, we included new material in that portion of Chapter 3 so readers can better understand this important and complex religion.
- A globalized economy, the growth and importance of international organizations such as the European Union, transnational cooperation to combat the war on terrorism, and many other factors have created a demand for foreign language knowledge. A completely new Chapter 6 examines the symbiotic relationship between language and culture. The chapter contains information about and examples of how language reflects cultural values, and specific advice on how you can adapt your language usage to promote understanding during intercultural interactions.
- Because technology now influences lives around the globe, we have included an overview of language on the Internet in Chapter 6.

- Due to the increased interest in intercultural contexts, all three chapters dealing with intercultural settings have been completely revised. Much of the new material is aimed at improving your communication skills in the intercultural environments of business, education, and health care.
- The importance of education in a multicultural society is discussed in Chapter 9. This chapter offers new material about the learning preferences of people from diverse cultural backgrounds. It also gives advice on how to create classrooms that reflect the various ethnicities of the surrounding community so culturally different students can feel welcome and comfortable. In addition, we have added more material on intercultural communication competence in the educational setting and have advanced a number of useful communication strategies that apply to the multicultural classroom.
- In a multicultural society, health care providers must be not only competent in their health care specialty, but also competent in their communications with patients and co-workers from diverse cultures. We have added material to help health care providers develop multicultural sensitivity and improve their ability to communicate with culturally diverse patients. We have also introduced a section on death and dying that helps explain cultural diversity in how individuals and families deal with terminal illness.
- As we have shown throughout the book, there are increasing numbers of people who will be moving into different cultures because of work in multinational businesses or because of having to resettle as refugees. In Chapter 11, we have added a completely new section on venturing into a new culture. In this chapter, we provide information on how to develop intercultural communication competence in preparation for arriving in a new culture. We also discuss the psychological and emotional problems of settling in a new culture by examining culture shock and the problems associated with adapting to life in a new culture. We end our discussion with a review of the ethics associated with intercultural interaction.
- As we have done in prior editions, we have integrated fresh examples throughout the book, along with hundreds of new references.

Acknowledgements

No book is the sole domain of the authors. Many people contributed to this new edition, and we would like to acknowledge them. We begin by thanking our editors. First, we thank Monica Eckman, Executive Editor, who continuously encouraged us and give us the freedom to advance new ideas. Second, we are grateful to the numerous contributions to this new edition provided by Kimberly Gengler, Developmental Editor. Kim always managed to make made us believe our book was the only project she was shepherding through production—which of course was not the case. We will miss her. We are also especially pleased with our long affiliation with Wadsworth Publishing Company—now a part of Cengage. While we have experienced and survived numerous changes in ownership, editors, and management, and even corporate name changes, the basic integrity of the company has remained intact.

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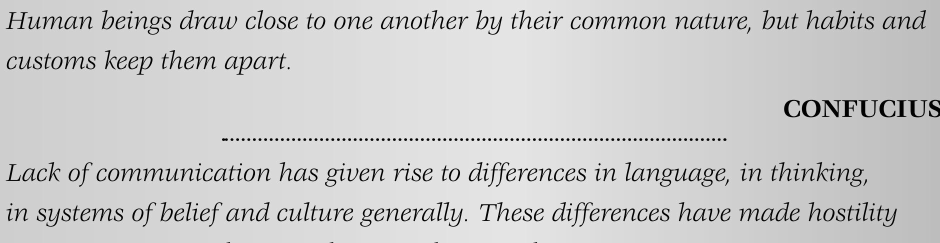
Larry A. Samovar
Richard E. Porter
Edwin R. McDaniel

CHAPTER 1

Communication and Culture: The Challenge of the Future



Human beings draw close to one another by their common nature, but habits and customs keep them apart.

CONFUCIUS

Lack of communication has given rise to differences in language, in thinking, in systems of belief and culture generally. These differences have made hostility among societies endemic and seemingly eternal.

ISAAC ASIMOV

We begin this book by stating two interrelated assumptions that serve to anchor everything we do from the start of the book to its conclusion. First, you share this planet with over 6.6 billion[1] other people who belong to thousands of cultural groups and speak thousands of different languages. Second, you currently live in an age when almost every person on the earth, regardless of his or her location, language, or culture, is or can be interconnected with everyone else. Many of those connections will be obvious as you walk across your campus and hear students speaking a language other than English or interact with coworkers from different ethnic groups. Others may not be so obvious until an event like the U.S. home mortgage crisis impacts world financial markets or an earthquake in Taiwan halts microchip production at two plants and the world electronics industry comes to a temporary standstill.[2] Now, more than at any other time in history, what happens in one part of the world touches all parts of the world. This book is about your adapting, adjusting, and taking part in this "new world." It is our belief that because most significant values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are rooted in culture, it behooves you to understand how cultural experiences help explain the way people perceive the world and carry out the business of daily living. Specifically, this book seeks to answer some of the following questions:

- Why are you often uncomfortable when encountering people who are different from yourself?
- Why do people from different cultures behave in ways that seem strange to you?

- How do cultural differences influence communication?
- Which cultural differences are important and which are inconsequential?
- Why is it difficult to understand and appreciate cultural differences?

Intercultural Communication Present and Future

Intercultural communication, as you might suspect, is not new. Since the dawn of civilization, when the first humans formed tribal groups, intercultural contact occurred whenever people from one tribe encountered members of another tribe and discovered that they were different. Sometimes these differences, in the absence of multicultural awareness and tolerance, elicited the human propensity to respond malevolently. However, in the pursuit of political alliances, knowledge, or commercial trade, these differences were more often recognized and accommodated. For instance, Alexander the Great was known to pay homage to the different gods of the lands he conquered and to encourage his followers to marry into the power elite families of those societies, thereby assuring a degree of political loyalty and stability.[3] The storied Library of Alexandria, thought to have been established in the third century B.C., accumulated texts from across the ancient world. Spices, silk, tea, and coffee made their way to Europe from China, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East via the Silk Road trade routes. Guns, modern medicine, and even bread were brought to the Far East by traders sailing from Western Europe on the voyages of discovery.

These cultural exchanges have accelerated in the past century at a dizzying pace, to the point where, as we mentioned, societies around the globe have been interwoven into a complex fabric of interdependent economic, technological, political, and social relationships. This interdependency is a salient characteristic of the world that you presently live in, and the future promises even greater interconnectivity, requiring increased cultural knowledge and language abilities. To help you understand how the challenges of the future will require you to acquire and use intercultural communication skills, we will discuss a number of areas in which global interconnectedness and the cultural dynamics of society will have a direct impact on your life. These areas include *globalization*, *international conflict and security*, *world competition for natural resources*, *global environmental challenges*, *world health care issues*, and *population shifts*.

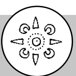
Globalization

Globalization has become a term common to many languages and used in many disciplines. Some use it positively and others use it negatively. It is defined variously, depending on the user's perspective and intent. Cameron sees globalization as "the ongoing integration of the world economy."[4] For Gannon, "Globalization refers to the increasing interdependence among national governments, business firms, nonprofit organizations, and individual citizens."[5] From an anthropological perspective, globalization is "worldwide interconnectedness, evidenced in global movements of natural resources, trade goods, human labor, finance capital, information, and infectious diseases."[6] The common theme resonating in these definitions is *connectedness*. It has become increasingly difficult to live your life without being affected by other people's opinions and actions. This connectedness, which constitutes the core of globalization, is the product of "growth in world trade and the business activity that accompanies it; dramatic improvements

Edwin McDaniel

Globalization has brought wrestlers from Bulgaria, Russia, Korea, Mongolia, Georgia, and even tiny Lithuania to the ancient Japanese sport of sumo wrestling.

in telecommunications; ease of data storage and transmission; increased facility and opportunity for business and leisure travel."[7] In order to better comprehend this transformation of the global society, let us take a minute and look at some of these forces of globalization.

REMEMBER THIS 

Globalization comprises "actions or processes that involve the entire world and result in something worldwide in scope."[8]

WORLD TRADE AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

This ability to quickly move products, equipment, people, information, and securities around the world, with little concern for national or international borders, has given rise to what are commonly called transnational corporations. Their global presence and reach is sometimes difficult to comprehend. For example, McDonald's busiest location is in Munich, Germany, and the most active 7-Eleven store is in Samutparkam, Thailand. Kentucky Fried Chicken is available at more than eleven thousand locations in over eighty countries. Baskin-Robbins ice cream can be purchased in over 5,800 stores, of which 2,700 are outside the United States.[9] As of May 2007, Toyota Motor Corporation, the world's largest automobile maker, operated "52 overseas manufacturing companies in 26 countries/regions" and marketed "vehicles in more than 170 countries/regions."[10] General Electric collected revenues of $163.3 billion, employed more than three hundred thousand people, and operated in over one hundred countries in 2007.[11]

Continuing technological advances in transportation, communication, and data transfer facilitate the ability of transnational corporations to reposition manufacturing processes in regions that offer low production costs, especially for labor, and to move products and services quickly to emerging markets. Mega-corporations are expected to

continue to expand in the near future, and their growth holds two principal concerns for you. First, there is a good likelihood that you will someday work for a transnational organization or one of its subsidiaries. As such, intercultural communication skills will be a critical necessity. The ability to work in a multicultural workforce and interact with people from other cultures, often in other languages, is inherent to the success of a multinational business.

A second concern will be how the economy is managed and controlled. According to Mandel, "Globalization has overwhelmed Washington's ability to control the economy."[12] The giant commercial companies now have the capacity to exert considerable influence on local, state, and national governments and, in the pursuit of open markets and free trade, have the ability to move goods across borders with few or no regulatory restrictions. China's export of lead-painted children's toys to the United States and of frozen *gyōza* (dumplings) contaminated with insecticides to Japan attest to the dangers of underregulated industries and insufficient quality control supervision.[13] Unlike governments, these huge organizations are not transparent and are responsible only to their shareholders, which allows them considerable operational flexibility. For example, the consolidation of media outlets into a few large organizations has had a homogenizing influence on available media, and this tends to stifle constructive debate, underrepresent minority views, and discount local perspectives.

Although many of these large organizations have developed viable programs to become good corporate citizens, their main objective remains making money, and improving social conditions is a much lesser concern. Thus, governments and nonprofit organizations (NPOs) will need to work across cultures to establish effective regulations and controls of the movement of goods and services across borders, and this may require new international organizations, such as "global institutions for governing the world economy."[14]

TECHNOLOGY AND TRAVEL

If you live in the United States, you can easily enjoy a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables year round that are shipped from all over the world. People living in Japan can eat bluefin tuna that was caught off the coast of Nova Scotia only days earlier and flown to Tokyo. People are now traveling widely for both business and pleasure. The U.S. Commerce Department has estimated that the United States will have as many as 61.6 million visitors in 2011.[15] This influx of international tourists will call for service personnel trained to interact successfully with people from a wide selection of cultures. Additionally, global business will bring more and more people together from different cultures. In some cases, this contact will be face-to-face interaction, and in other instances, it will be virtual contact via electronic means. But regardless of the medium, successfully interaction will require well-developed intercultural communication skills.

Technology will also expand the ability of people throughout the world to connect with each other. At the end of 2007, there were an estimated 3.3 billion cell phone subscribers in the world,[16] and in many countries, cell phones are now perceived as necessities rather than conveniences. Cell phones are already used for voice and e-mail communication and Internet access, and function as cameras, voice recorders, personal organizers, game devices, and music players. Japanese university students can now upload "cell phone novels"[17] to help relieve the tedium of their daily train and bus commute, which in some cases takes up to two hours one way. As a

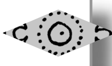
Gloria Thomas

The speed of modern aircraft has made tourism a major contributor to intercultural contact.

result of cell phones' variety of uses and declining costs, the number of subscribers is expected to grow, and international phone connections are becoming more commonplace. Will you know the proper phone etiquette when traveling in another culture?

Advancing technology also promises to increase exponentially the amount of information available in the very near future. A new Internet, dubbed "The Grid," is expected to operate at "speeds about 10,000 times faster than a typical broadband connection."[18] A recent corporate study on the future of digital information reported, "Between 2006 and 2010, the information added annually to the digital universe will increase more than sixfold. . . ."[19] Management and regulation of this deluge of information will require international cooperation and the establishment of mutually agreeable protocols.

IMAGINE THIS



- *You are on a tour of the Louvre Museum in Paris, admiring the Mona Lisa, when your cell phone rings with a call from your mother.*
- *You are riding the bus in Beijing, using your cell phone to watch a music video, when the person next to you leans over and starts watching.*
- *You are in an important meeting with a client in Saudi Arabia and you receive a message on your cell phone indicating that president of your company is impatiently awaiting an answer to the e-mail he sent earlier.*

What do you do in each of these situations?

The Internet allows people almost anywhere in the world to exchange ideas and information.

Bill Bachmann/PhotoEdit

COMPETITION FOR NATURAL RESOURCES

Globalization has greatly increased the economic strength of many nations, and this has significantly intensified international competition for the natural resources needed to sustain commercial growth. In addition, rapidly expanding middle classes in China and India are creating a demand for consumer and luxury products to improve their rising lifestyles. Your own spending habits have no doubt already been impacted by the heightened competition for oil, partly because of greater demand in China and India.[20] But oil is merely one of many natural resources being subjected to intensified international competition:

> [China] accounts for about a fifth of the world's population, yet it gobbles up more than half of the world's pork, half of its cement, a third of its steel and over a quarter of its aluminum. It is spending 35 times as much on imports of soybeans and crude oil as it did in 1999, and 23 times as much importing copper—indeed, China has swallowed over four-fifths of the increase in the world's copper supply since 2000. . . . The International Energy Agency expects China's imports of oil to triple by 2030.[21]

The rise in prices of natural resources has had a particularly harmful impact on many third-world nations. The increased price of oil naturally leads to a concurrent rise in the cost of food production, a cost that is passed on to consumers. And the demand for alternative energy sources has caused many farmers to switch from growing cereal grains such as wheat to producing corn for biofuel. Increased use of vegetable oils for biofuel production has created a shortage of cooking oil in undeveloped countries. Collectively, this has resulted in rising prices and food scarcities in many African, Southeast Asian, and South Asian nations. The president of the World Bank has warned that the world is "now perched at the edge of catastrophe."[22] The problem is of such significance that representatives from the major developed nations are actively seeking solutions,[23] an effort that will call for extensive intercultural communication.

The ocean's ever-declining fish stocks are also a product of intensified global competition for food. According to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, of "all the world's natural resources, fish are being depleted the fastest."[24] Whether you eat fish or not, if left unresolved this situation can have very grave consequences. Many underdeveloped nations depend on fish as a primary source of protein, and it has been estimated that "by 2050 we will only be able to meet the fish protein needs of half the world population."[25] Existing scientific guidelines and regulatory organizations designed to control and preserve the fishing industry have failed.[26] Rectifying this problem will require increased international agreements, enforcement and monitoring of those agreements, and cooperation in policing against fishing piracy.

International Conflict and Security

There can be no doubt that the world is a much more dangerous place than it was just a decade ago. Combating the threat of international terrorism requires a vast, coordinated network stretching across many international borders. Nations are now sharing terrorist-related information on an unprecedented scale. To fully understand and employ much of this information, and to interact with representatives from other nations, requires considerable intercultural communication skills. This international cooperation will be a continuing requirement for protecting our homelands for many years to come.

Weapons of mass destruction continue to pose a threat to most of the world, and efforts to mitigate that danger will require concerted international action. For example, China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Russia, and the United States have been meeting with North Korea in an effort to reduce that nation's nuclear arms capability. Coordinated international programs will also be needed to help resolve flare-ups of ethnic violence, such as those that occurred in early 2008 in Kenya between members of the Kikuyu tribe and members of other ethnic groups. In all of these efforts, culture and communication will be a central concern. This is borne out by the United States Marine Corps's experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, which led it to recognize the importance of having cultural knowledge when interacting with indigenous populations. As a result, cultural training programs have been instituted to ensure that all Marines have a "basic understanding of culture, both American and foreign . . . training on specific cultures can only take place once this basic foundation is built."[27]

Environmental Challenges

Your future will also be marked by the challenges of environmental change. For many people in the world, global warming and other forms of environmental degradation are not scientific theories or predictions; they are ongoing realities. For example, in the Sundarbans, a vast low-lying delta along the border of India and Bangladesh, rising waters are already destroying fields and homes.[28] Global warming is also thought to be contributing to increased desertification in arid regions of China and North Africa. One result, when coupled with industrial pollution, is atmospheric dust storms "containing plant pollens, fungal spores, dried animal feces, minerals, chemicals from fires and industry, and pesticide residues."[29]

Experts are also predicting that continued global warming will produce a worldwide shortage of water, which will affect even the United States. According to a White House report on climate change issued in May 2008, the future will be characterized by "worsening water shortages for agricultural and urban users" across the entire United States.[30] Additionally, military experts have indicated that water problems resulting from global warming "will make poor, unstable parts of the world—the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia—even more prone to wars, terrorism and the need for international intervention."[31] The need for intercultural communication skills to help lessen and resolve these projected problems should be quite clear.

The challenge of natural disaster response work also calls for intercultural communication proficiency. In late December 2005, an undersea earthquake created a tsunami that inundated the coastal areas of eleven Indian Ocean nations, killing an estimated 230,000 people[32] and leaving millions homeless. In October 2005, an earthquake in the Kashmir region, which borders India and Pakistan, claimed as many as 79,000 lives and forced 3.5 million people into refugee camps.[33] In early May 2008, a typhoon struck Myanmar (formally Burma) and a few weeks later an earthquake devastated Sichuan Province in central China. The death toll from these two tragedies will probably exceed two hundred thousand; in addition, millions have lost their homes.

Programs to mitigate the human suffering caused by these calamities required international relief efforts on an unprecedented scale. Rescue teams, medical personnel, disease control professionals, logistics experts, and many other international specialists quickly converged on these areas to assist in recovery operations. Relief agencies from around the world rushed in people and supplies to help the victims. These recovery efforts will continue for extended periods. And, as you would expect, all of this work will require an enormous amount of intercultural communication. In addition to language, it is important to know the cultural norms of the people receiving aid. With experts predicting that climate change will bring more intense tropical storms and flooding to low-lying coastal areas, disaster relief work is expected to increase worldwide.

World Health Issues

Contemporary global interconnectedness also influences current and future health care concerns. Stop for a minute and think about how quickly the virus that causes AIDS traveled around the world. Then recall the international coordination that was required to spread prevention awareness information across cultures. To thwart the transmission of mad cow disease, many countries had to coordinate their efforts to test and track animals, handle products suspected of being tainted, and agree on safeguards

for prevention and control. A large number of national governments and international agencies are currently working to control, and find a vaccine for, a deadly strain of avian flu. This has involved the culling and killing of "hundreds of millions of birds" since 2003.[34] It has been estimated that hundreds of millions of people could die in a worldwide pandemic should this strain mutate and become transmissible between humans.[35] Also, the World Health Organization is directing worldwide efforts to detect, monitor, and report on incidents of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), which can be spread easily by international travelers.[36] Communication must extend across multiple cultures for these efforts to succeed.

The future promises even greater need for international agreement and cooperation to ensure safety from diseases. For instance, researchers have found that the atmospheric dust clouds, which we discussed earlier in this chapter, can transport "bacteria, fungus, and viruses that may transmit diseases to humans."[37] Global warming also promises to accelerate death rates due to diarrhea, malaria, and dengue fever among the peoples of poverty-stricken nations.[38]

CONSIDER THIS

The United Nations estimates that the world's population could grow to over nine billion by mid-century.[39]

World Population (thousands) (1950–2050)

Year	Population
1950	2,535,093
1960	3,031,931
1970	3,698,676
1980	4,451,470
1990	5,294,879
2000	6,124,123
2010	6,906,558
2020	7,667,090
2030	8,317,707
2040	8,823,546
2050	9,191,287

What type of intercultural problems might be created by this population growth?

Shifting Populations

IMMIGRATION

The world's population is increasing! At about the time when many of you will begin to think about what you will do in your retirement years, the current population of approximately 6.6 billion could exceed 9 billion, according to estimates by the United Nations.[40] Most of this growth will occur in developing nations,[41] further straining already overburdened, inadequate social support systems. In many instances, untenable living conditions and the lack of economic opportunity will force people to look to the developed world. This could, of course, increase the waves of immigrants already moving to the developed nations, particularly Western Europe and the United States, and further change the cultural and social complexion of those nations. For example, immigrants currently make up about 11 percent of Spain's population and as much as 10 percent of Ireland's.[42] These immigrants, arriving from Africa, the former Soviet Republics, and Eastern Europe, and the expectation of

more to come, are quite naturally the subject of heated debate. From one perspective, the immigrants are seen as a threat to the long-established traditional values of the native culture, which in some cases can become a form of racism. However, on the other side of the argument, the new arrivals are seen as much-needed additions to the national economies because they supplement the shrinking indigenous workforce and pay taxes that sustain social support systems, such as retirement and health care programs, as the native population ages. Regardless of which side you take in this clash of perspectives, the situation will give rise to greatly increased intercultural communication needs.

With over three hundred million people, the United States is now the world's third most populous country, behind China and India.[43] While population figures for the United States are expected to continue rising, and could reach 438 million by 2050, this growth is being driven by immigration, not births.[44] According to estimates by the Pew Research Center:

> Nearly one in five Americans (19%) will be an immigrant in 2050, compared with one in eight (12%) in 2005. . . . [and] The Latino population, already the nation's largest minority group, will triple in size and will account for most of the nation's population growth from 2005 through 2050. Hispanics will make up 29% of the U.S. population in 2050, compared with 14% in 2005.[45]

Clearly, this will change the complexion of U.S. society and give rise to additional cultural considerations. It is one thing to think of problems that can result when people from different cultures interact in a business or social context, but the changing demographics of the United States give rise to a host of other factors. Cultural considerations concerning medicine, education, language, cross-cultural marriages, child care, and more will come into play. Many of these considerations are already affecting American society, but the increasing demographic changes will thrust them into greater prominence.

THE AGING U.S. POPULATION

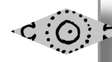
In the United States, with population growth comes an increasing number of older adults. Again, according to Pew research:

> The nation's elderly population will more than double in size from 2005 through 2050, as the baby boom generation enters the traditional retirement years. The number of working-age Americans and children will grow more slowly than the elderly population, and will shrink as a share of the total population.[46]

Quite simply stated, today people everywhere are living longer than they did in the past. Many of these people, especially in the United States, either will desire to work past traditional retirement age or will be forced to do so by personal economic conditions. This, of course, brings another cultural factor into play. As you already know, your parents' values do not always coincide with yours, and those of your grandparents probably diverge from yours even more. Take the perspective that older generations can actually be viewed as a co-culture and think for a minute about how different generational perspectives can clash in the workplace as more older people continue their employment.

MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

For our final look at the future, we want to discuss the growth of the multicultural society in which you will live. You are already well acquainted with the diversity of American society along ethnic lines, and we have just discussed how that diversity will continue to grow as a result of immigration. However, there is another aspect of this multicultural society. Indeed, it was a salient issue during the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination campaign. Much was made of the mixed heritage of Senator Barack Obama, whose father was from Kenya. Although Obama was born in the state of Hawaii, as a youth, he spent several years in Indonesia with his white American mother and Indonesian stepfather.[47] The mixed ethnic backgrounds of celebrities like baseball player Derek Jeter and golfer Tiger Woods are also well known. There are, of course, many more people of mixed heritage. A 2008 report from the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that were 4,856,136 people in the United States whose heritage was of "two or more races."[48] This indicates that this group has a growth rate ten times faster than that of the white population, but approximately equivalent to that of Hispanic and Asian Americans. This growth is a result of surging interracial/interethnic marriages[49] throughout the United States, fueled partly by greater social acceptance. These pairings clearly present cultural and language problems for the husband and wife, as well as their children. We will talk about issues of multicultural identity in Chapter 4.

IMAGINE THIS 

Erina, originally from Europe, and Lee, originally from Asia, have been married for ten years and have two children, ages seven and five. Both Erina and Lee came to the United States to attend college, do not speak each other's first language, use English as a second language, and recently became U.S. citizens. They maintain close ties with their families in Europe and Asia and often return there for visits.

What are some of the challenges of this intercultural marriage? What language and identity issues will their children face?

There are even signs that globalization is producing a transnational cultural group. According to Bird and Stevens:

> Increasingly, an identifiable and homogeneous group is emerging at least within the world business community. This group neither shares a common geographic location, socioeconomic class, religion, native language nor a national culture. Yet they share a common set of values, attitudes, norms, language, and behaviors. With one foot in their native culture and one foot in the global arena, they are members of a distinctly identifiable and emerging global culture. In some cases, they appear to share more in common with others active in the global village than with those of their own national culture. They are members of what we identify as the *emergent global culture*.[50]

You may well have the opportunity to interact with or become a member of this new cultural group during your professional career.

These first few pages contain only a few of the endless examples of how society is transforming as the world becomes metaphorically smaller. We believe these examples should convince you of the many and varied changes that you will confront during your adult life. In addition, as we previously mentioned, a constant theme associated with these changes is the interconnectedness of contemporary society. This interconnectedness means people

of different nationalities and ethnic origins, many speaking different languages and holding different convictions, must learn to work and live together, despite the likelihood of conflict. We hope, therefore, that by now you have recognized that you are faced with a requirement to expand and improve your cultural awareness and intercultural communication competence. If so, then you are ready to begin your study of intercultural communication.

DEFINING OUR TERMS

Intercultural Communication

Because we have been using the term *intercultural communication* from the beginning, it only seems appropriate that we pause and give meaning to those two words. Since we employ the terms *dominant culture* and *co-culture* throughout the book, we believe it would also be of value to define those concepts. Let us begin with intercultural communication. For us, intercultural communication occurs when a member of one culture produces a message for consumption by a member of another culture. More precisely, *intercultural communication involves interaction between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough to alter the communication event*.

The Dominant Culture

When we refer to a group of people as a *culture*, we are applying the term to the dominant culture found in most societies. In discussions of the United States, many terms have been employed to represent this group. In the past, terms such as *umbrella culture*, *mainstream culture*, *U.S. Americans*, or *European Americans* have been used. We prefer the term *dominant culture* because it clearly indicates that the group we are talking about is the one in power. This is the group that usually has the greatest amount of control over how the culture carries out its business. This group possesses the power that allows it to speak for the entire culture while setting the tone and agenda that others will usually follow. The power is not necessarily found in numbers, but in control. The people in power are those who historically have controlled, and who still control, the major institutions within the culture: church, government, education, military, mass media, monetary systems, and the like. As McLemore notes:

> The dominant group in American society was created as people of English ethnicity settled along the Atlantic seacoast and gradually extended their political, economic, and religious control over the territory. This group's structure, values, customs, and beliefs may be traced to (a) the English system of law, (b) the organization of commerce during the sixteenth century, and (c) English Protestant religious ideas and practices.[51]

Historically in the United States, adult white males generally meet the requirements of dominance, and have done so since the establishment of this country. Although white males constitute less than 40 percent of the U.S. population,[52] it is their positions of power, not their numbers, which foster this degree of control. White males are at the center of the dominant culture because their positions of power enable them to determine and manipulate the content and flow of the messages produced by various political, economic, and religious institutions. It should be noted that a dominant group that greatly influences perceptions, communication patterns, beliefs, and values is a characteristic of all cultures.

What these groups use as the basis for their power (money, fear, the military, etc.) may differ from culture to culture, but in every case, the dominant group leads the way. Regardless of the source of power, certain people within every culture have a disproportionate amount of influence, and that influence is translated into how other members of the culture behave. The election of Barack Obama as President of the United States, however, may signal the beginning of the diffusion of power historically held by white males to other groups.

Co-Cultures

As we have just pointed out, within each society you will find a dominant culture, but this culture is not monolithic. That is to say, within the dominant culture you will find numerous co-cultures and specialized cultures. As Victor suggests, "A national culture is never a homogeneous thing of one piece. In every culture, there are internal contradictions or polarities. U.S. culture is no exception."[53] We believe that the best way to identify these groups is by using the term *co-cultures*, because it calls attention to the idea of dual membership. We will, therefore, use the word co-culture when discussing *groups or social communities exhibiting communication characteristics, perceptions, values, beliefs, and practices that are sufficiently different to distinguish them from other groups and communities and from the dominant culture*.

Some co-cultures share many of the patterns and perceptions found within the larger, dominant culture, but their members also have distinct and unique patterns of communication that they have learned as part of their membership in the co-culture. As you will see later in this chapter when we discuss culture in detail, most of the co-cultures in the United States meet many of the criteria and characteristics that we will apply to describe culture. These co-cultural affiliations can be based on race, ethnic background, gender, age, sexual preference, or other factors.[54] What is important about all co-cultures is that being gay, disabled, Latino, African American, Asian American, American Indian, or female, for example, exposes a person to a specialized set of messages that help determine how he or she perceives some aspects of the external world. It also significantly influences how members of that co-culture communicate those perceptions.

CONSIDER THIS

Below are the words inscribed on the Statue of Liberty. They were intended to express a set of cultural attitudes and values regarding personal freedom and opportunity. How do you think those words apply to the current debate on immigration in the United States?

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

The Statue of Liberty historically represents the cultural attitudes and values of the United States regarding personal freedom and opportunity.

Richard Porter

Before we apply the three definitions we have just examined (intercultural communication, dominant culture, and co-culture) to the study of intercultural communication, we need to pause and talk about human communication. Our rationale for beginning with communication is simple. While this book is about the role of culture in communication, it is also about what the phrase "intercultural communication" implies about human interaction. By understanding some principles inherent in communication, you will be able to observe how these principles are acted out in the intercultural setting.

Communication

The importance and influence of communication on human behavior are dramatically underscored by Keating when she writes, "Communication is powerful: It brings companions to our side or scatters our rivals, reassures or alerts children, and forges consensus or battle lines between us."[55] What she is saying is that communication—your ability to share your beliefs, values, ideas, and feelings—is at the heart of all human contact. Whether people live in a city in Canada, in a village in India, on a farm in Israel, or in the Amazon rain forests of Brazil, they all employ the same activity when they attempt to share their thoughts and feelings with others. While the results produced when sending messages might be different, the reasons people communicate tend to be the same. As a means of pointing out the importance of communication to human activity, let us look at some of those reasons.

The Functions of Communication

COMMUNICATION ALLOWS YOU TO GATHER INFORMATION ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE

Personal experience will tell you that when you meet someone for the first time, you immediately begin to gather information about him or her. That information serves two purposes. First, it enables you to learn about the other person. Second, it assists you in deciding how to present yourself. These judgments affect everything from the topics you select to talk about to whether you decide to continue the conversation or terminate it. This information, collected by both verbal and nonverbal messages, is essential in intercultural communication because in many instances you are dealing with "strangers."

COMMUNICATION HELPS FULFILL INTERPERSONAL NEEDS

While there may be many times when you feel frustrated with other people and find comfort in solitude, in most instances people are social creatures, and therefore communicating with others satisfies a great many needs. In conversation with others, you may experience enjoyment, warmth, friendship, and even escape. In short, communication is one of the major ways in which you fulfill a social component within yourself. This linking up with others allows you to experience a sense of inclusion, affection, and even control. Although cultures might express these feelings and emotions differently, all people, by both nature and nurture, have a need to communicate and interact with others.[56]

COMMUNICATION ESTABLISHES PERSONAL IDENTITIES

Communication does much more than help you gather information and meet your interpersonal needs. Communication also plays a role in determining and defining your identity. Whether it be your individual, group, or cultural identity, your interaction with others offers you insight into who you are, where you belong, and where your loyalties rest. Identity is so important to intercultural communication that we later devote an entire chapter to the topic. Here we only remind you that one of the main functions of communication is to facilitate your acquiring a sense of self.

COMMUNICATION INFLUENCES OTHERS

This final function suggests that communication allows you to send verbal and nonverbal messages that can shape the behavior of other people. Adler and Proctor describe this function in the following manner: "Besides satisfying social needs and shaping identity, communication is the most widely used approach to satisfying what communication scholars call instrumental goals: getting others to behave in ways we want."[57] If you take a moment to reflect on the activities of a normal day, you will discover that you engage in an immeasurable number of face-to-face situations intended to influence others. They range from asking a friend for a ride home to trying to persuade someone to vote for one candidate over another.

Now that we have talked about the purposes of communication, we are ready to define communication and to discuss some of the basic principles of communication.

Communication Defined

There was good reason for the English statesman Benjamin Disraeli to write, "I hate definitions." While definitions are necessary, they can also be troublesome. The word "communication" is a case in point. Over thirty-five years ago, Dance and Larson canvassed the literature on communication and found 126 definitions of the word "communication."[58] Since then, countless others have been added to their list. Isolating the commonalities of those definitions, and wishing to select one that is all-encompassing, we hold that ***communication is a dynamic process in which people attempt to share their internal states with other people through the use of symbols.***

Principles of Communication

Because this is a book about communication and culture, it seems only fitting that we pause at this time and discuss some of the principles of communication. There are, however, a few points to keep in mind before we catalog some of these principles. First, communication has more characteristics than we can discuss in the next few pages. Just as a description of a forest that mentions only the trees and flowers but omits the wildlife and lakes does not do justice to the entire setting, our inventory is not exhaustive. We, too, are forced to leave out some of the landscape. Second, while the linear nature of language forces us to discuss one principle at a time, keep in mind that in reality the elements of communication are in continuous interaction with one another.

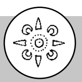
COMMUNICATION IS A DYNAMIC PROCESS

You will notice that the words *dynamic process* were contained in our definition. That should signify the importance of this principle. In addition, these two words have more than one meaning. First, the words indicate that communication is an ongoing activity and an unending process;[59] it is not static. Communication is like a motion picture, not a single snapshot. A word or action does not stay frozen when you communicate; it is immediately replaced with yet another word or action. Second, the phrase *dynamic process* conveys the idea that sending and receiving messages involves a host of variables, all in operation at the same time. Both parties in the transaction are seeing, listening, talking, thinking, perhaps smiling, and touching, all at once. Third, the concept of "process" also means that you and your partner are part of the dynamic process of communication. You are constantly affected by other people's messages and, as a consequence, are always changing—and your messages are changing other people. From the moment of conception through the instant of death (and some cultures believe even after death), you experience an almost endless variety of physical and psychological changes, some too subtle to notice, others too profound to ignore. As you shall see later in the chapter, culture, too, is dynamic.

COMMUNICATION IS SYMBOLIC

Inherent in our definition of communication is the fact that humans are symbol-making creatures. *In human communication, a* symbol *is an expression that stands for or represents something else*. One key characteristic of symbols, and one that must be kept in mind, is that symbols bear no inherent relation to what they are intended to represent and are,

therefore, arbitrary. They are only sounds, marks on paper, movements, etc. that you employ in your attempt to share your reality with other people. This symbol-making ability allows for everyday interaction. Wood presents an excellent summary of some of the ways symbols allow people to share their realities:

REMEMBER THIS 

Because you cannot directly access the internal thoughts of another person, you must rely on and interpret their use of verbal and nonverbal symbols to represent those thoughts.

> We use symbols to create meanings. We ask others to be sounding boards so we can clarify our thinking, figure out what things mean, enlarge our perspectives, check our perceptions, and label feelings to give them reality. In all these ways, we actively construct meaning by interacting with symbols.[60]

Humans do not use symbols only for interaction; as we shall discuss later in this chapter, this same symbol-making ability enables culture to be passed on from generation to generation. Now, after millions of years of physical evolution and thousands of years of cultural evolution, people are able to generate, receive, store, and manipulate symbols. This sophisticated system allows them to use a symbol—be it a sound, a mark on paper, a statue, a Braille cell, a bodily movement, or a painting—to pass on an idea or a feeling, or to seek information.

The main reason communication is symbolic is that there is no direct mind-to-mind contact between people. You cannot access the internal thoughts and feelings of other human beings; you can only infer what they are experiencing by what you see and hear. As we noted, you make these inferences from a single word, from silence, from long speeches, from simple head nods, and from glances in your direction or away from you. This characteristic of communication has always frustrated human beings because, in a very real sense, all people are isolated from one another by the enclosure of their skin. What you know and feel remains inside of you unless you symbolically express it; this expression is communication. It is as if you lived in a house with doors and windows that never opened. Perhaps the day will come when one of the futuristic devices from *Star Trek* becomes a reality, and another human being can have direct access to what you are experiencing, but for now, you must live in a kind of solitary confinement. An African proverb makes this point figuratively: "The earth is a beehive; we all enter by the same door but live in different cells."

Although the inability to have direct mind-to-mind contact is universal, the methods used to adjust to this limitation are culturally based. Some cultures believe that because they share a common pool of history and many similar experiences, they do indeed know what their cultural cohorts are feeling and thinking. Yet in many Western cultures, the lack of direct access to another's mind places great demands on such communication behaviors as asking questions, engaging in self-disclosure, and over-verbalizing.

As we conclude our discussion of symbols, we must again remind you that the symbols you use are discretionary and subjective. As Gudykunst and Kim note, "The important thing to remember is that symbols are symbols only because a group of people agree to consider them as such. There is not a natural connection between symbols and their referents: the relationships are arbitrary and vary from culture to culture."[61] What is being said here is that although all cultures use symbols, they usually assign their own meanings to the symbols. Not only do Spanish speakers say *perro* for "dog," but the mental image

they form when they hear the sound is probably quite different from the one the Chinese form when they hear *gǒu*, their word for "dog." In addition to having different meanings for symbols, cultures use these symbols for different purposes. In North America and much of Europe, the prevalent view is that communication is used to get things done. Trenholm and Jensen manifest this Western orientation when they note, "Communication is a powerful way of regulating and controlling our world."[62] Because symbols are at the core of communication, we will be discussing them throughout the book.

COMMUNICATION IS CONTEXTUAL

We say communication is *contextual* because "[it] occurs in particular situations or systems that influence what and how we communicate and what meanings we attach to messages." Put in slightly different terms, communication does not occur in isolation or in a vacuum, but rather is part of a larger system composed of many ingredients, all of which must be considered. As Littlejohn states, "Communication always occurs in a context, and the nature of communication depends in large measure on this context."[64] What this implies is that setting and environment help determine the words and actions you generate and the meanings you give the symbols produced by other people. Context provides what Shimanoff calls a "prescription that indicates what behavior is obligated, preferred, or prohibited."[65] Dress, language, touch behavior, topic selection, and the like are all adapted to context. Reflect for a moment on how differently you would behave in each of the following settings: a church, a courtroom, a funeral, a wedding, a hospital, and a nightclub. For example, under most circumstances, a male would not attend a university lecture, even in hot weather, without wearing a shirt. Even the words we exchange are contextual. The simple phrase "How are you?" shifts meaning as you move from place to place and person to person. To a friend it can be a straightforward expression used as a greeting. Yet in a doctor's office, at an appointment for an examination, the same three words ("How are you?") uttered by the physician call for a detailed response.

Many of these contextual rules are directly related to one's culture. For example, in the business setting, all cultures have stated and unstated rules regarding who takes part in the decision-making process during meetings. In the United States, the rule tells us it is the boss. The simple American maxim "The buck stops here" gives us a clue as to the operational rule regarding decision making in the United States. In Japan, nearly everyone is consulted as part of the decision-making process. The Japanese proverb "Consult everyone, even your knees" demonstrates the Japanese approach to decision making.

As we mentioned, when we speak of communication being contextual, we are referring to a host of variables. Let us pause and look at some elements associated with the contextual nature of communication.

Cultural Context. The largest contextual component is the cultural setting in which the communication is taking place. This framework governs all the other environments since it includes learned behaviors and rules that the participants bring to a communication event. For example, if you were raised in a culture in which people touch each other as a greeting, and, out of politeness during an introduction, you touch a woman from a non-touch culture, you may have accidentally violated the rules of a particular cultural context.

Environmental Context. Some simple introspection should tell you that people do not act the same way in every environment. Whether it is an auditorium, a restaurant, or

an office, the location of your interaction provides guidelines for your behavior. Either consciously or unconsciously, you know the prevailing rules, many of which are rooted in your culture. Nearly all cultures, for example, have religious buildings, but the rules for behavior in those buildings are culturally based. In Mexico, men and women go to church together and remain quiet. In Iran, men and women do not worship together, and praying aloud instead of in silence is the rule.

Occasion. The occasion of a communication encounter also controls the behavior of the participants. The same auditorium can be the occasion for a graduation ceremony, pep rally, convocation, play, dance, or memorial service. Each of these occasions calls for distinctly different forms of behavior. For example, somberness and silence are usually the rule at a solemn American Protestant funeral, while an Irish wake calls for lively music, dancing, and a great deal of merriment.

Time. The influence of time on communication is so subtle that its impact is often overlooked. To understand this concept, you must answer these questions: How do you feel when someone keeps you waiting for a long time? Do you respond to a phone call at 2:00 A.M. the same way you do to one at 2:00 P.M.? Do you find yourself rushing the conversation when you know you have very little time to spend with someone? Your answers to these questions reveal how often the clock controls your actions. Every communication event takes place on a time-space continuum, and the amount of time allotted, whether it is for social conversation or a formal speech, affects that event. Cultures as well as people use time to communicate. In the United States, schedules and time constraints are ever present. As Hall and Hall note, "For Americans, the use of appointment-schedule time reveals how people feel about each other, how significant their business is, and where they rank in the status system."[66] Because time influences communication and the use of it is culture-bound, we treat the topic in greater detail in Chapter 7, which deals with nonverbal communication.

Number of People. The number of people with whom you communicate also affects the flow of communication. You feel and act differently if you are speaking with one person, in a group, or before a great many people. Cultures also respond to changes in number. For example, people in Japan find small-group interaction much to their liking, yet they often feel extremely uncomfortable when they have to give a formal public speech.

COMMUNICATION IS SELF-REFLECTIVE

This characteristic of communication states that humans have the ability to think about themselves, their communication partners, their messages, and the potential results of those messages, *all at the same time*. Ruben expresses this unique feature as follows: "Because of self-reflectiveness, we are able to think about our encounters and our existence, about communication and human behavior."[67] We are the only species that can be at both ends of the microscope at the same time. This very special feature allows you to monitor your actions and, when necessary or desirable, make certain adjustments.

WE LEARN TO COMMUNICATE

Your ability to communicate is a complex interplay between what is in your genes (and does not have to be learned) and what you learn about communication during your

lifetime. Without getting into the complexities of genetic science, what we are saying is that human beings are equipped with the necessary anatomy, physiology, and chemistry to learn new information through their entire lives. In addition, it is important to keep in mind that there is no upper limit to how much you can learn. This notion is often referred to as the brain being an "open-ended system." We can tell you one fact after another, and your brain can store it away. You may have trouble remembering it, but the information is there. For example, if we write that Leon Festinger developed the theory of cognitive dissonance, "Student Prince" is a great race horse, and Ulan Bator is the capital of Mongolia, and you did not know these facts prior to reading them, you now have them stockpiled somewhere in your brain. What applies to these trivial pieces of information also pertains to how you learned to communicate. As Verderber and Verderber note, "Your interpersonal effectiveness is a direct result of the language skills and conversational scripts you learned. If your family spoke German, you learned to communicate in German. If your family believed it rude to look a person directly in the eyes while speaking, you learned to avert your eyes when talking."[68]

This idea that the brain is an open system has some direct implications for intercultural communication. First, what you know at any one instant, and how you respond to that knowledge, are products of what you have experienced. Not all people have had the same experiences, and not all cultures have gathered the same information. Hence, people carry around assorted funds of knowledge. Obviously, what you know may not be what other people know. In one culture, people have received information on how to use camels or horses for transportation, while in another people have received instructions on how to drive automobiles. We again note that although this is not a profound notion, people often forget to keep it in mind when interacting with people from cultures different from their own.

Second, the concept that we can always acquire new ideas and information should remind you that you can always learn things from other people. One culture's special skill for treating heart disease can be transmitted to a culture lacking this information. A culture that employs acupuncture to cure certain ailments can teach this technique to people whose culture lacks that expertise. In short, the best that we have as a people can be shared.

COMMUNICATION HAS A CONSEQUENCE

Inserted into our last principle was the idea that people can learn something from every experience to which they are exposed. A corollary of this concept is the nucleus of our final principle: *the act of sending and receiving symbols influences all the involved parties*. Put in slightly different terms, "All of our messages, to one degree or another, do something to someone else (as well as to us)."[69] West and Turner underscore this same point by noting, "The process nature of communication also means that much can happen from the beginning of the conversation to the end. People may end up at a very different place once the discussion begins."[70] Your responses to messages vary in degree and kind. It might help you to try to picture your potential responses in the form of a continuum. At one end of the continuum lie responses to messages that are overt and easy to understand. Someone sends you a message by asking directions to the library. Your response is to say, "It's on your right." You might even point to the library. The message from the other person has thus produced an observable response. A little farther across the continuum are those messages that produce only a mental response. If someone says to you, "The United States doesn't spend enough money on higher education," and you only think about this statement, you are still responding, but your response is not an observable action.

CONSIDER THIS

Having just read a section on human communication, how would you answer the following questions?

a. Is it possible to perceive the world as other people perceive it?

b. Why do people differ in the manner in which they communicate?

c. Is communication a phenomenon that involves a receiver or a sender or both?

d. Can communication patterns be changed?

As you proceed across the continuum, you come to responses that are harder to detect. These are responses to messages you receive made by imitating, observing, or interacting with others. Generally, you are not even aware that you are receiving these messages. Your parents act out their gender roles, and you receive messages about your gender role. People greet you by shaking hands instead of hugging, and, without being aware of it, you are receiving messages about forms of address.

At the far end of the continuum are responses to messages that are received unconsciously. That is, your body responds even if your cognitive processes are kept to a minimum. Messages that you receive can alter your hormonal secretions, your heart rate, or the temperature of your skin; modify pupil size; and trigger a host of other internal responses. These chemical and biological responses are not outwardly observable, and they are the most difficult ones to classify. However, they give credence to our assertion that communication has a consequence. If your internal reactions produce chaos in your system, as is the case with severe stress, you can become ill. Regardless of the content of the message, it should be clear that the act of communication produces change.

The response you make to someone's message does not have to be immediate. You can respond minutes, days, or even years later. For example, your second-grade teacher may have asked you to stop throwing rocks at a group of birds. Perhaps the teacher added that the birds were part of a family and were gathering food for their babies. She might also have indicated that birds feel pain just like people. Perhaps twenty years later, you are invited to go quail hunting. You are about to say "yes" when you remember those words from your teacher and decide not to go.

One of the most important implications of this last principle is the potential influence you can have over other people. Whether or not you want to grant those consequences, you are changing people each time you exchange messages with them. Wood buttresses this view when she writes, "What we say and do affects others: how they perceive themselves, how they think about themselves, and how they think about others. Thus, responsible people think carefully about ethical guidelines for communication."[71]

We conclude this section on communication by reminding you of a point that should be obvious by now: *communication is complex*. We must add that it is even more complex when the cultural dimensions are included. Although all cultures use symbols to share their realities, the specific realities and the symbols employed are often quite different. In one culture, you smile in a casual manner as a form of greeting, whereas in another you bow formally in silence, and in yet another you acknowledge your friend with a full embrace. From our discussion, you should now have an understanding of the concept of communication and the role it plays in everyday interaction. With this background in mind, we now turn to the topic of culture.

Culture

Moving from communication to culture provides us with a rather seamless transition, for as Hall points out, "Culture is communication and communication is culture."[72] Put into slightly different words, when looking at communication and culture it is hard to decide which is the voice and which is the echo. The reason for the duality is that you "learn" your culture via communication, while at the same time communication is a reflection of your culture. This book manifests the authors' strong belief that you cannot improve your intercultural communication skills without having a clear understanding of this thing we call culture. The powerful link between communication and culture can be seen in the following few questions:

- Some people in many parts of the world put dogs in their ovens, but people in the United States put them on their couches and beds. Why?
- Some people in Kabul and Kandahar pray five times each day while sitting on the floor, but some people in Las Vegas sit up all night in front of video poker machines. Why?
- Some people speak Tagalog and others speak English. Why?
- Some people paint and decorate their entire bodies, but others spend hundreds of dollars painting and decorating only their faces. Why?
- Some people talk to God, but others have God talk to them, and still others say there is no God. Why?
- Some people shake hands when introduced to a stranger, but other people bow at such an encounter. Why?

The general answer to all of these questions is the same: culture. As Peoples and Bailey point out, "cultures vary in their ways of thinking and ways of behaving."[73] As you may have noticed, all of the questions we posed dealt with thinking and behaving. Rodriguez underlines the influence of culture on human perception and actions when she writes, "Culture consists of how we relate to other people, how we think, how we behave, and how we view the world."[74] Although culture is not the only stimulus behind your behavior, its omnipresent quality makes it one of the most powerful. As Hall concluded, "There is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture."[75]

What makes culture so unique is that you share your culture with other people who have been exposed to similar experiences. While your personal experiences and genetic heritage form the unique *you*, culture unites people with a collective frame of reference that is the domain of a community, not a characteristic of a single person. As Hofstede points out, "Culture is to a human collective what personality is to an individual."[76] Nolan reaffirms this idea when he suggests that culture is a group worldview, the way of organizing the world that a particular society has created over time. This framework or web of meaning allows the members of that society to make sense of themselves, their world, and their experiences in that world.[77] It is this sharing of a common reality that gives people within a particular culture a common fund of knowledge. Chiu and Hong offer an excellent summary of some of the activities and perceptions that grow out of a shared way of experiencing the world:

> Shared knowledge gives rise to shared meanings, which are carried in the shared physical environment (such as the spatial layout of a rural village, subsistence economy) social institutions (e.g., schools, family, the workplace), social practices (e.g., division of labor) the language, conversation scripts, and other media (e.g., religious scriptures, cultural icons, folklores, idioms).[78]

Inherent in our discussion of culture is the idea that culture helps people make sense of the world. Remember that although you are born with all the anatomy and physiology needed to live in the world, you are not born into a world that has meaning for you. You do not arrive in this world knowing how to dress, what toys to play with, what to eat, which gods to worship, what to strive for, or how to spend your money and your time. Culture is both teacher and textbook. From how much eye contact you employ in conversations to why you believe you get sick, culture plays a dominant role in your life. As we have noted, this book is about how different cultures produce different lives. And when cultures differ, communication practices also differ. As Smith pointed out:

> In modern society different people communicate in different ways, as do people in different societies around the world; and the way people communicate is the way they live. It is their culture. Who talks with whom? How? And about what? These are questions of communication and culture. A Japanese geisha and a New England librarian send and receive different messages on different channels and in different networks. When the elements of communication differ or change, the elements of culture differ or change. Communication and culture are inseparable.[79]

We have tried to convince you that culture is a powerful force in how you see the world and interact in that world. To further that indoctrination, let us now (1) *define culture*, (2) *explain the basic functions of culture*, (3) *highlight the essential elements of culture*, and (4) *discuss the major characteristics of culture*.

Defining Culture

The preceding discussion on the topic of culture should enable you to see that culture is ubiquitous, complex, all pervasive, and—most of all—difficult to define. As Harrison and Huntington note, "The term 'culture,' of course, has had multiple meanings in different disciplines and different contexts."[80] The elusive nature of the term is perhaps best reflected in the fact that as early as 1952 a review of the anthropology literature revealed 164 different definitions of the word *culture*.[81] As Lonner and Malpass point out, these definitions "range from complex and fancy definitions to simple ones such as 'culture is the programming of the mind' or 'culture is the human-made part of the environment.' "[82] The media also uses the word to portray aspects of individual sophistication such as classical music, fine art, or exceptional food and wine. This, of course, is not the way we plan to use the word. For our purposes, we are concerned with a definition that contains the recurring theme of how culture and communication are linked. One definition that meets our needs is advanced by Triandis:

> Culture is a set of human-made objective and subjective elements that in the past have increased the probability of survival and resulted in satisfaction for the participants in an ecological niche, and thus became shared among those who could communicate with each other because they had a common language and they lived in the same time and place.[83]

We like this definition because it highlights, in one long sentence, the essential features of culture. First, by referring to "human-made" it makes it clear that culture is concerned with nonbiological parts of human life. This allows for explanations of behavior that are innate and do not have to be learned (such as eating, sleeping, crying, speech

mechanisms, and fear). Second, the definition includes what Harrison and Huntington call the "subjective" elements of culture—elements such as "values, attitudes, beliefs, orientations, and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in a society."[84] Think for a moment of all the subjective cultural beliefs and values you hold that influence your interpretation of the world. Your views about the American flag, work, immigration, freedom, age, ethics, dress, property rights, etiquette, healing and health, death and mourning, play, law, individualism, magic and superstition, modesty, sex, status differentiation, courtship, formality and informality, bodily adornment, and the like are all part of your cultural membership. Finally, the definition also calls attention to the importance of language as a symbol system that allows culture to be transmitted and shared. As Philipsen notes, culture involves transmitted patterns of "symbols, meanings, premises, and rules."[85]

The Basic Functions of Culture

At the core of culture is the idea that it is intended to make life easier for people by "teaching" them how to adapt to their surroundings. As Triandis notes, culture "functions to improve the adaptation of members of the culture to a particular ecology, and it includes the knowledge that people need to have in order to function effectively in their social environment."[86] A more detailed explanation as to the functions of culture is offered by Sowell:

> Cultures exist to serve the vital, practical requirements of human life—to structure a society so as to perpetuate the species, to pass on the hard-learned knowledge and experience of generations past and centuries past to the young and inexperienced in order to spare the next generation the costly and dangerous process of learning everything all over again from scratch through trial and error—including fatal errors.[87]

What is being said is that culture serves a basic need by laying out a predictable world in which each of you is firmly grounded. It thus enables you to make sense of your surroundings. As Haviland notes, "In humans, it is culture that sets the limits on behavior and guides it along predictable paths."[88] The English writer Fuller echoed the same idea in rather simple terms when he wrote, two hundred years ago, "Culture makes all things easy." It makes things easy because culture shields people from the unknown by offering them a blueprint for all of life's activities. While people in every culture might deviate from this blueprint, they at least know what their culture expects from them. Try to imagine a single day in your life without the guidelines of your culture. From how to earn a living, to how an economic system works, to how to greet strangers, to explanations of illness, to how to find a mate, culture provides you with structure.

Elements of Culture

While culture is composed of a countless number of elements (food, shelter, work, defense, social control, psychological security, social harmony, purpose in life, etc.), there are five elements that relate directly to this book. Understanding these elements will enable you to appreciate the notion that while all cultures share a common set of components, the acting out of these issues often distinguishes one culture from another.

HISTORY

Over two thousand years ago, the Roman orator Cicero remarked that history provides guidance in daily life. It seems he was right, because all cultures believe in the idea that history is a diagram that offers direction about how to live in the present. What is interesting about a culture's history is that, like most of the important elements of culture, it is transmitted from generation to generation and helps perpetuate a culture's worldview. These stories of the past offer the members of a culture part of their identity, values, rules of behavior, and the like. History highlights the culture's origins, "tells" its members what is deemed important, and identifies the accomplishments of the culture of which they can be proud. As you shall see in the next chapter, while all cultures pass on a history that helps shape their members, each history is unique to a particular culture and carries specific cultural messages. The "lessons" of the Holocaust, the Spanish conquest of Mexico, the motivation behind the building of the Great Wall of China, and the American Revolution are stories that are special to their respective cultures and help explain contemporary perceptions held by members of those cultures.

RELIGION

Another feature of all cultures is religion. More specifically, according to Parkes, Laungani, and Young, all cultures possess "a dominant, organized religion within which salient beliefs and activities (rites, rituals, taboos, and ceremonies) can be given meaning and legitimacy."[89] The influence of religion can be seen in the entire fabric of a culture since it serves so many basic functions. Ferraro notes that these functions include social control, conflict resolution, reinforcement of group solidarity, explanations of the unexplainable, and emotional support.[90] These functions consciously and unconsciously impact everything from business practices (the Puritan work ethic) to politics (the link between Islam and government) to individual behavior (codes of ethics). Because religion is so powerful and pervasive, we shall examine it in greater detail in Chapter 3.

VALUES

Values are another feature of every culture. According to Peoples and Bailey, values are "critical to the maintenance of culture as a whole because they represent the qualities that people believe are essential to continuing their way of life."[91] The connection between values and culture is so strong that it is hard to talk about one without discussing the other. As Macionis notes, values are "culturally defined standards of desirability, goodness, and beauty that serve as broad guidelines for social living."[92] The key word in any discussion of cultural values is "guidelines." In other words, values help determine how people ought to behave. To the extent that cultural values differ, you can expect that participants in intercultural communication will tend to exhibit and to anticipate different behaviors under similar circumstances. For example, while all cultures value the elderly, the strength of this value is often very different as you move from culture to culture. In the Korean and American Indian cultures, the elderly are highly respected and revered. They are even sought out for advice and counsel. This is, of course, in stark contrast to the United States, where the emphasis is on youth. We will return to a detailed comparison of cultural values in Chapter 5.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Another feature found in all cultures is what we call "social organizations." These organizations (sometimes referred to as social systems or social structures) represent the various social units contained within the culture. Such institutions—including the family, government, schools, and tribes—help the members of the culture organize their lives. These social systems establish communication networks and regulate norms of personal, familial, and social conduct.[93] The ways in which these organizations function and the norms they advance are unique to each culture. Nolan underscores the nature of these organizations in the following illustration:

> Social structures reflect our culture, for example, whether we have kings and queens, or presidents and prime ministers. Within our social structure, furthermore, culture assigns roles to the various players—expectations about how individuals will behave, what they will stand for, and even how they will dress.[94]

So important are social organizations that we will make them the focus of the next chapter.

LANGUAGE

Language is yet another feature that is common to all cultures. So crucial is language to every culture that Haviland and his colleague point out, "Without our capacity for complex language, human culture as we know it could not exist."[95] As we shall see later in this chapter, and again in Chapter 6, not only does language allow the members of a culture to share ideas, feelings, and information, but it is also one of the chief methods for the transmission of culture. Whether they are English, Swahili, Chinese, or French, most words, meanings, grammar, and syntax bear the identification marks of a specific culture.

Characteristics of Culture

By means of comparative studies, experts have concluded that there are a series of "basic characteristics that all human cultures share."[96] Examining these characteristics will help you become a better intercultural communicator for two reasons. First, as we move through these characteristics, the strong connection between culture and communication will become apparent. As Huntington notes, "The heart of culture involves language, religion, values, traditions, and customs."[97] Second, this might be the first time you have been asked to examine your own culture or been exposed to the theory of culture. As Brislin points out, "People do not frequently talk about their own culture or the influence that culture has on their behavior."[98] People are often so close to their culture that there is no need to examine or discuss it, and because much of human behavior is habitual, they are unaware of the influence it has on their perceptions and interaction patterns. Remember, most of culture is in the taken-for-granted realm and below the conscious level. Learning about culture can therefore be a stimulating awakening as you give meaning to your actions and the actions of others. Shapiro offered much the same pep talk when he wrote:

> The discovery of culture, the awareness that it shapes and molds our behavior, our values and even our ideas, the recognition that it contains some element of the arbitrary, can be a startling or an illuminating experience.[99]

Gloria Thomas

Much of culture is transmitted unconsciously by observation and imitation.

CULTURE IS LEARNED

CONSIDER THIS

What ten words do you think best describe your culture?

We begin with perhaps that most important characteristic of culture: it is learned. From the moment of birth to the end of your life, you seek to define the world that impinges on your senses. This idea is often difficult to comprehend because for most of you cannot remember a world without definitions and meanings. Yet perhaps you can imagine what a confusing place this world must be to a newborn infant. After living in a peaceful environment, the newborn, with but a brief transition, confronts sights, sounds, tastes, and other sensations that, at this stage of life, have no meaning. What greets the newborn must be, as the psychologist William James noted, a bubbling, babbling mass of confusion. The confusion is in part overcome by culture. As Ferraro observes, "The child who is born into any society finds that the problems that confront all people have already been solved by those who have lived before."[100] As children move from word to word, event to event, and person to person, they seek meaning in everything. The meanings children give to these experiences are learned and culturally based. In some ways, this entire book is about how different cultures teach their members to define the circumstances and people that confront them. As the Ferraro quotation underscores, without the advantages of learning from those who lived before, life would be difficult—if not

impossible. In fact, "the group's knowledge stored up (in memories, books, and objects) for future use" is at the core of the concept of culture.[101] You are born with basic needs—needs that create and shape behavior—but how you go about meeting those needs and developing behaviors to cope with them is learned. As Bates and Plog note:

> Whether we feed ourselves by growing yams or hunting wild game or by herding camels and raising wheat, whether we explain a thunderstorm by attributing it to meteorological conditions or to a fight among the gods—such things are determined by what we learn as part of our enculturation.[102]

It is important to recognize the use of the term *enculturation* in the above paragraph. This term denotes the total process of learning one's culture. More specifically, enculturation is, as Hoebel and Frost say, "conscious or unconscious conditioning occurring within that process whereby the individual, as child and adult, achieves competence in a particular culture."[103] From infancy, members of a culture learn their patterns of behavior and ways of thinking until most of those patterns become internalized and habitual. What is special about this "learning process" is that any normally healthy infant can be placed into any family on earth and will learn its culture and accept it as his or her own.

When we speak of learning, we are using the word in a rather broad sense. We are talking about both informal and formal learning.[104] *Informal learning*, which is often very subtle, normally takes place through interaction (your parents kiss you and you learn about kissing—whom, when, and where to kiss), observation (you watch your father wash the car and your mother wash the dishes, and you learn about gender roles—what a man does, what a woman does), and imitation (you laugh at the same jokes your parents laugh at and you learn about humor).

The *formal* teaching of a culture is far more structured and is often left to the various institutions of the culture, such as schools and churches. When a school system teaches computer skills, American history, or mathematics, it is giving the members of a culture the tools and information the culture deems important. When a child has a Sunday school lesson focusing on the Ten Commandments, he or she is learning about ethical behavior. As you might suspect, it is often difficult to distinguish between informal and formal learning. Because culture influences you from the instant you are born, you are rarely aware of many of the messages that it sends. As Keesing says, ". . . culture tends to be unconscious."[105] This unconscious or hidden dimension of culture leads many researchers to claim that culture is invisible. There is even a famous book about culture by Edward T. Hall titled *The Hidden Dimension*.[106] The title is intended to call attention to the important premise that "the presence of culture is so subtle and pervasive that it simply goes unnoticed. It's there now, it's been there as long as anyone can remember, and few of us have reason to think much about it."[107] Most of you would have a difficult time pointing to a specific event or experience that taught you to stand when an important person enters the room, how to use direct eye contact, the roles of silence and space, the importance of attractiveness, why you might wear a baseball cap in public, your view of aging, your ability to speak one language instead of another, and your preference for activity over meditation or for one mode of dealing with conflict over another. Or try to isolate where you learned what is considered "cool" in your culture. You might be able to point to what you think is "cool," but telling someone how you learned to be "cool" would be a near-impossible task.

While you would readily recognize how you learned to solve a specific chemistry problem, you would have a much harder time with your culture's more subtle "teachings." Reflect for a moment on the learning that is taking place in the following examples:

- A little boy in the United States whose grandfather tells him to shake hands when he is introduced to a friend of the family is learning good manners.
- An Arab father who reads the Koran to his one-day-old son, the father is teaching the child about God.
- An Indian child who lives in a home where the women eat after the men is learning gender roles.
- A Jewish child who helps conduct the Passover ceremony is learning about traditions.
- An Egyptian child who is told by his uncle that his behavior brings shame to his family is learning cultural values.
- A Japanese girl who attends tea ceremony classes is learning about patience, self-discipline, and ritual.
- A fourth-grade student watching a film on George Washington crossing the Delaware River is learning about patriotism and fortitude.

In these examples, people are learning their culture through various forms of communication. That is why, earlier in this chapter, we said that culture is communication and communication is culture. Wood clearly establishes this important link between culture and communication when she writes, "We learn a culture's views and patterns in the process of communicating. As we interact with others, we come to understand the beliefs, values, norms, and language of our culture."[108]

A number of points should be clear by now. First, learning cultural perceptions, rules, and behaviors usually goes on without your being aware of it. Second, the essential messages of a culture get reinforced and repeated. Third, you learn your culture from a large variety of sources, with family, church, and state being the three most powerful carriers of culture. We will examine these three in the next few chapters, and in Chapter 9, we will discuss how schools are also a conduit for culture. But for now let us touch on some of the more invisible "instructors" and "instructions" that are part of every culture.

Learning Culture through Proverbs. In nearly every culture, proverbs—communicated in colorful, vivid language, and with very few words—offer an important set of values and beliefs for members of the culture. They also reflect the wisdom, biases, and even superstitions of a culture. Proverbs go by many names (such as maxims, truisms, and sayings), yet they all are intended to carry the truths and accumulated insights of the culture. Proverbs are so important to the learning process that there is even a German proverb that notes, "A country can be judged by the quality of its proverbs." Proverbs are learned easily and repeated with great regularity. Because they are brief (a line or two), their power as a teacher is often overlooked. Yet many great Chinese philosophers such as Confucius, Mencius, Chung Tzu, and Lao-tzu used proverbs and maxims to express their thoughts to their disciples—thoughts that still endure in the Chinese culture. These proverbs survive so that each generation learns what a culture deems significant. As Sellers tells you, "Proverbs reunite the listener with his or her ancestors."[109] Seidensticker notes that "[proverbs] say things that people think important in ways that people remember. They express common concerns."[110] Hence, "proverbs are a compact treatise on the values of culture."[111]

Because all people, regardless of their culture, share common experiences, many of the same proverbs appear throughout the world. For example, in nearly every culture some degree of thrift and hard work is stressed. Hence, in Germany the proverb states, "One who does not honor the penny is not worthy of the dollar." In the United States people are told, "A penny saved is a penny earned." Because silence is valued in Japan and China, a Japanese proverb says, "The quacking duck is the first to get shot,"

and a Chinese proverb states, "Loud thunder brings little rain." In addition to numerous universal proverbs, there are also thousands of proverbs that each culture uses to teach lessons that are unique to that particular culture. The importance of proverbs as a reflection of a culture is underscored by the fact that "interpreters at the United Nations prepare themselves for their extremely sensitive job by learning proverbs of the foreign language"[112] that they will be translating. As Mieder notes, "Studying proverbs can offer insights into a culture's worldview regarding such matters as education, law, business, and marriage."[113] Roy offers a summary as to why the understanding of cultural proverbs is a valuable tool for students of intercultural communication.

> Examination of these orally transmitted traditional values offer an excellent means of learning about another culture because the oft-repeated sayings fuse past, present, and future. These sayings focus our attention on basic principles accepted within the culture.[114]

The following are but a few of the hundreds of proverbs and sayings from the United States, each of which attempts to instruct about an important value held by the dominant culture.

- *Strike while the iron is hot* and *He who hesitates is lost*. Both of these proverbs underscore the idea that, in the United States, people who make quick decisions are highly valued.
- *Actions speak louder than words* and *Nothing ventured, nothing gained*. As we note later in this chapter, Americans are a "doing" culture; activity, taking chances, and getting things done are important to the dominant culture.
- *Man does not live by bread alone* and *Make hay while the sun shines*. Both of these proverbs call attention to the importance of leisure time to Americans.
- *God helps those who help themselves*, *Pull yourself up by your bootstraps*, and *No pain, no gain*. These three sayings highlight the strong belief held in America that people should show individual initiative and never give up.
- *A man's home is his castle*. This expression not only tells us about the value of privacy, but also demonstrates the male orientation in the United States by implying that the home belongs to the man.
- *The squeaky wheel gets the grease*. In the United States, people are encouraged to be direct, speak up, and make sure their views are heard.
- *Variety is the spice of life*, *Lightning never strikes twice in the same place*, and *There is more than one way to skin a cat*. All three sayings, in very different ways, are suggesting that change is a way of life and must be accepted and adapted to. You will see later in the book that many cultures do not welcome change.

The following are a few proverbs from some non-U.S. cultures.[115] We are not only offering these proverbs because they apply to our discussion of how we learn culture, but also because they will help you learn about other cultures' worldviews. Some of these proverbs may appear elsewhere in this book, as we will use them to explain further the beliefs, values, and communication behavior of the cultures from which they are drawn

- *God gave us the nuts but he doesn't crack them* and *What you can do today, don't postpone until tomorrow*. These two sayings from the German culture reflect the German notion that people should work hard.
- *To know the road ahead, ask those coming back*. This proverb from the Chinese culture is intended to teach the importance of respecting the views of the elderly.

CONSIDER THIS

How would someone from a culture other than the United States interpret the following sentences?

a. There is just too much red tape involved in applying for a fellowship.

b. Passing the history examination was a piece of cake.

c. Try not to deal with him; he's a cutthroat.

d. The deadline has passed; I think I have missed the boat.

e. The only way she could do it was to go cold turkey.

- *One does not make the wind, but is blown by it*. This saying, found in many Asian cultures, suggests that people are guided by fate rather than by their own devices. A somewhat similar view about destiny and fate is found in the Spanish proverb that states, *Since we cannot get what we like, let us like what we can get*. And for the Mexican culture, fate is affirmed in a proverb that notes, *Man proposes and God disposes*.
- *Fall seven times, stand up eight*. This Japanese proverb teaches the value of persistence and patience.
- *A man's tongue is his sword*. With this saying, Arabs are taught to value words and use them in a powerful and forceful manner.
- *Those who know do not speak and those who speak do not know*. This famous quote from the Analects of Confucius, stressing silence over talk, is very different from the advice give in the previous Arab proverb.
- *Even in paradise, it's not good to be alone*. This Jewish proverb reaffirms the collective nature of that culture and the importance placed on interaction. Combining interaction with education and collectivism, yet another Jewish proverb offers the following truism: A *table is not blessed if it has fed no scholars*.
- *When spiderwebs unite, they can tie up a lion*. This Ethiopian proverb teaches the importance of collectivism and group solidarity. In the Japanese culture, the same idea is expressed with the following proverb: A *single arrow is easily broken, but not a bunch*. For the Yoruba of Africa, the same lesson is taught with the proverb A *single hand cannot lift the calabash to the head*.
- *A harsh word dropped from the tongue cannot be brought back by a coach and six horses*. This Chinese proverb stresses the importance of monitoring your anger. The Japanese have a similar proverb regarding anger: *The spit aimed at the sky comes back to one*. The Koreans, who also believe that interpersonal anger should be kept in check, offer the following proverb: *Kick a stone in anger and harm your own foot*.
- *Sweep only in front of your own door*. This German proverb reflects the very private nature of the Germans and their strong dislike of gossip. There is a somewhat similar proverb found in the Swedish culture: *He who stirs another's porridge often burns his own*.
- *A zebra does not despise its stripes*. From the Maasai of Africa, this saying expresses the value of accepting things as they are. There is a similar proverb found in the Mexican culture: *I dance to the tune that is played*.
- *The candle of someone who lies almost always burns just to midnight*. This Turkish proverb attempts to teach the evils of being deceitful and lying.

Learning Culture through Folktales, Legends, and Myths. While the words *folktales*, *legends*, and *myths* have slightly different meanings, we use the three words interchangeably

because they all deal with narratives that are intended to transmit the important aspects of a culture. They are used in a variety of settings (such as at home, in school, and at church), at all stages of language development (oral, written, etc.), and at each stage of life (infancy, childhood, and adulthood). These stories contain the wisdom, experiences, and values of the culture. Telling stories that contain a lesson has been a method of teaching for thousands of years. Rodriguez mentions some of the purposes of folktales that have contributed to their longevity:

> Folktales are not only regarded as some of the best keepers of our language and cultural memories, they are also great helpers in the process of socialization, they teach our children the sometimes difficult lessons about how to interact with other people and what happens when virtues are tested or pitted against one another.[116]

Anthropologists Nanda and Warms add to the words of Rodriguez while mentioning some of the other purposes of folktales:

> Folktales and storytelling usually have an important moral, revealing which cultural values are approved and which are condemned. The audience for folktales is always led, through the ways the tale is told, to know which characters and attributes are a cause for ridicule or scorn and which characters and attributes are to be admired.[117]

Haviland augments the list of the subject matter of these cultural stories when he notes their concerns are "the fundamentals of human existence: where we and everything in our world came from, why we are here, and where we are going."[118] Whether it tells of Pinocchio's nose growing larger because of his lies, Columbus's daring voyage, Captain Ahab's heroics as he seeks to overcome the power of nature, Abraham Lincoln learning to read by drawing letters on a shovel by the fireside, Robin Hood helping the poor, or Johnny Appleseed helping everyone by planting trees, folklore constantly reinforces important cultural lessons. In passing, it should be said that some of these lessons are very subtle. Notice, for example, the built-in gender bias in all of our examples. In each story, males are the main characters and heroes. When females appear in cultural stories (the Little Mermaid, Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, etc.), they are often portrayed as submissive and docile. This is a common caricature of females in many cultures.

As noted, the stories that are passed on from generation to generation stress moral messages that each culture deems important. Americans revere the tough, independent, fast-shooting cowboy of the Old West; the English admire good manners, courtly behavior, and dignity, as is reflected in the "Canterbury Tales"; the Japanese learn about the importance of duty, obligation, and loyalty from "The Tale of the Forty-Seven Ronin;" and the Sioux Indians use the legend of "Pushing Up the Sky" to teach what people can accomplish if they work together. Mexican mothers and grandmothers tell the Mayan folktale "The Story of Mariano the Buzzard" to teach children to work hard and not be lazy.[119] And the Chinese teach the folly of impatience by telling the tale of a farmer who did not like the slow growth of his plants so he tugged on them an inch each day until he managed to uproot them. The Irish still admire the mythical warrior Cu Chulainn. In one of his most famous exploits, he single-handedly fights the armies of Queen Mebh of Connacht and wins the battle that saves Ulster. Similar tales of superhuman heroes are found in nearly every culture. Greeks learn about Hercules, Jews learn about Samson, Norwegians learn about Thor, and Americans learn about Paul Bunyan. In Zaire, children are told the Myth of Invincibility. In this story, young boys learn that if they wrap green vines around their head, their enemies' weapons cannot hurt them.[120] Shiite Muslims pass

on a seventh-century tale of how the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, knowing he was going to die, fought to his death. In the story of Hanukkah it is told how, in the second century, a small band of Jews defeated a much larger army. That historic victory, know as the Maccabean Revolt, is commemorated even today with festive religious and family events. Heroic feats are also at the core of the story of Mexico's *Cinco de Mayo*, which is celebrated as a national holiday. Here the historical story tells how on May 5, 1862 the small Mexican army defeated a much larger and better-equipped invading French army. In each of these stories, as Ferraro points out, "The heroes and heroines who triumph in folktales do so because of their admirable behavior and character traits."[121]

Legends and myths often do more than accent cultural values: "[t]hey confront cosmic questions about the world as a whole"[122] and usually deal with actions and deeds that reflect supernatural powers. Myths often form the basis of creation stories in primitive cultures as well as in the major religious traditions. In addition, they can tell you about specific details of life that might be important to a group of people. Writing about American Indian myths and legends, Erdoes and Ortiz make the following point concerning what stories can tell us about what was, and is, important to the American Indian culture:

> They are also magic lenses through which we can glimpse social orders and daily life: how families were organized, how political structures operated, how men caught fish, how religious ceremonies felt to the people who took part, how power was divided between men and women, how food was prepared, how honor in war was celebrated.[123]

As you have seen, myths, folktales, and legends are found in every culture and deal with ideas that matter most to that culture—ideas about life, death, relationships, nature, and the like. Campbell maintains that "myths are stories of our search through the ages for truth, for meaning, for significance. We all need to tell our story and to understand our story."[124] Because myths offer clues into culture, Campbell urges us not only to understand our story but also to read other people's myths.[125] We strongly concur with Campbell: when you study the myths of a culture, you are studying that culture.

Learning Culture through Art. It has been suggested that art is a mirror image of a society. Historians and anthropologists would agree that art is a powerful influence on all cultures. During World War II, the occupying forces of Germany and Russia looted each other's national art treasures, believing that by destroying the art of a people you are, in part, destroying that culture. Since the beginning of history, art has provided a reflection of how a collection of people saw the world. The earliest Egyptian, Roman, Greek, Chinese, and Mayan artworks tell a story of how those people lived and what they thought. Even the scrawling on ancient cave walls informs us of what people were thinking and feeling thousands of years ago. Just take a trip to any museum in the world and you will see how art, be it painting or sculpture, in addition to being a creative expression of beauty, is also a method of passing on the culture. Art even helps explain the "social elements of culture such as gender, identity and status."[126] As Haviland and his associates point out, "art often reflects a society's collective ideas, values, and concerns."[127] Nanda underscores this important idea, noting that " . . . art forms do not merely reflect a society and its culture, but also heighten cultural integration by displaying and confirming the values that members of a society hold in common. . . . The arts make dominant cultural themes visible, tangible, and thus more real."[128]

Having established the link between learning one's culture and the influence of art on that process, let us now offer just a few examples to buttress our argument. For

centuries, the Chinese have seen the link between art and the transmission of cultural values. According to the art historian Gombrich, the Chinese have long "thought of art as a means of reminding people of the great examples of virtue in the golden ages of the past."[129] You can learn about one of those Chinese virtues by examining the subject matter of Chinese paintings. In Asian cultures, most art depicts objects, animals, and landscapes rather than focusing on people. It even attempts to highlight spiritual concerns. According to Hunter and Sexton, Chinese art often represents "Buddhist and Taoist concerns with the mind in meditation, with the relative insignificance of human striving in the great cosmos, and with the beauty of nature."[130] American and European art, however, often emphasizes people. Whether in portraits of a single person or pictures of an entire family, people are the focus. This disparity reflects a difference in views: Asians believe that nature is more powerful and important than a single individual, whereas Americans and Europeans consider the individual to be at the center of the universe. In addition, in Western art, the artist tries to create a personal message. This is not the case with most Asian artists. As Campbell notes, "Such ego-oriented thinking is alien completely to the Eastern life, thought, and religiosity."[131] The rule of the Asian artist is not to "innovate or invent."[132.]

As we already indicated, art is a relevant symbol, a forceful teacher, and an avenue for cultural values. We need only look at the art on totem poles to see what matters to American Indians of the northwestern United States. The carvings on these poles chronicle how deeply these people are concerned about their ancestors, family, history, identity, wildlife and nature.[133] Keesing adds that American Indian carvings show the relationships "between humans and animals, plants, and inanimate objects."[134] This art, whose purpose is to tell stories, is very different from the art of Islam. As you will see in Chapter 3, the Koran forbids the depiction of human figures; hence, calligraphy, geometric design, pottery, and carpets are perceived as fine art. Even inscriptions from the Koran are considered a form of art.[135]

It should be clear from our brief discussion of art in culture that Haviland and his colleagues are correct when they write, "Through the cross-cultural study of art and creativity, we discover much about different worldviews, religious beliefs, political ideas, social values, kinship structures, economic relationships, and historical memory as well."[136]

Learning Culture through Mass Media. This is no more a book about mass media than it is a book about folktales or art. We are simply pausing to examine mass media as a way of calling your attention to the many "teachers" and "messages" used to pass on culture. When we speak of mass media, we are talking about those media that are created, designed, and used to reach very large audiences. The impact of these devices on a population is now common knowledge. As Thompson points out, "few people would deny that the nature of cultural experience in modern societies has been profoundly affected by the development of mass communication."[137] Wood endorses and amplifies Thompson's view when she writes, "Today, mass media is a major source of information and entertainment. Yet mass communication does more than report information and entertain us. It also presents us with views of human beings, events, and cultural life."[138] By presenting this "cultural life," mass media carries images and stories that contribute to a sense of identity at the same time that it shapes beliefs and values.

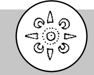
The variety of mass media outlets (such as newspapers, television, film, music, magazines, and the Internet) only serves to reinforce and enlarge mass media's impact on American culture. In short, the media is part of everyone's daily life. Whether it is reporting the news from Iraq to millions of people, beaming the endless parade of

so-called celebrities into our front rooms, or introducing young children in the United States to *Teletubbies*, television contributes to what Williams calls "mass social learning."[139] A 2007 government study examining the "screen time" of American children between the ages of six and thirteen revealed that the average time spent viewing computers, videogames, and TV was "nearly five and one-half hours per day."[140] Over three hours of that time was devoted to TV viewing.[141] It is easy to see how these images affect attitudes and perceptions toward leisure time, sex, and what is and is not important. They also define people of different ethnic groups, genders, and/or age groups. Delgado offers an excellent summary of the power of mass media outlets by noting that they "help constitute our daily lives by shaping our experiences and providing the content for much of what we talk about (and how we talk) at the interpersonal level."[142]

As we have said elsewhere, cultural messages are repeated and reinforced, and come from various sources. We are now looking at media as one of those sources. While it is difficult to make a direct cause-and-effect link, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry reports that, based on hundreds of studies, "Extensive viewing of television violence by children causes greater aggressiveness."[143] In the United States, films, video games, and television glorify violence. The language we use in sports mirrors and sanctions violence. Watching a sporting event on television, you'll hear statements like "he has that killer instinct," "he is a headhunter," "it's war on that court," "they are out for blood," and "they are playing smash-mouth defense." In the United States you can also find countless mass media examples that stress the importance of individualism—a key American value. Think for a moment of the thousands of ways you have been told the importance of not being like everyone else. Burger King says, "Sometimes you just have to break the rules." Dodge sells its trucks by telling you, "Rules are for fools," and Ralph Lauren announces, "There are no boundaries."

Gender roles are also learned and reinforced by the mass media. Although there are many exceptions, most studies reveal that in the United States men are valued over women. Women are seen as caring, emotional, socially skilled, and family oriented, while men are taken to posses the opposite set of traits.[144] These same characteristics are stressed by most of the mass media.[145] We will have much more to say about the learning of gender roles when we move to the next two chapters and examine how the family and religion contribute to gender roles.

We conclude our description of the first characteristic of culture by reminding you of two key points. First, most of the behaviors we label as "cultural" are automatic, invisible, and usually performed without our being aware of them. For example, in American culture, women smile more often than do men,[146] a behavior learned unconsciously and performed almost habitually. Second, it is important to remind you that we have mentioned only some of the many ways we learn our culture. Space constraints have forced us to leave out many subtle yet powerful "teachers." For example, in every culture, sports are much more than simple play. As Nanda and Warms tell us, "Football in America and bullfighting in Spain are both popular because they illustrate important themes of the respective cultures. They are exciting in part because they tell stories loaded with cultural meaning."[147] According to Gannon, we can see these stories and their cultural meanings in everything from Japanese gardens

REMEMBER THIS 

Culture is learned in a variety of ways and from a host of different sources.

to French wine, from German symphonies to Italian opera.[148] These cultural metaphors represent and teach, according to Gannon, "the underlying values expressive of the culture itself."[149]

CULTURE IS SHARED

As you saw in our first characteristic, the means of transmitting the culture can take a variety of forms (proverbs, stories, art) and can have numerous "carriers" (family, peers, media, schools, church), but the key elements of culture (values, ideas, perception) must be shared by all members of the culture. Haviland and his associates explain this "sharing" process when they write:

> As a shared set of ideas, values, perceptions, and standards of behavior, culture is the common denominator that makes the actions of individuals intelligible to other members of their society. It enables them to predict how other members are most likely to behave in a given circumstance, and it tells them how to react accordingly.[150]

What this sharing means is that "culture is the common denominator that makes the actions of individuals intelligible to the other members of society."[151]

By sharing a common set of perceptions and behaviors, members of a culture can also share a common cultural identity. This cultural identity produces a situation where members of each culture "recognize themselves and their culture's traditions as distinct from other people and other traditions."[152] We will have much more to say about shared cultural identity throughout this book. For now, keep in mind that having this identity adds one more dimension to the characteristic that states culture is shared.

CULTURE IS TRANSMITTED FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

The American philosopher Thoreau once wrote, "All the past is here." As regards culture, Thoreau is correct. Culture is shared, as we noted in our last characteristic, However, if a culture is to endure, it must make certain that its crucial messages and elements are not only shared, but are passed on to future generations. In this way, the past becomes the present and helps prepare for the future. As Brislin said, "If there are values considered central to a society that have existed for many years, these must be transmitted from one generation to another."[153] According to Charon, this process of transmitting culture can be seen as a kind of "social inheritance."[154] Charon elaborates on this idea when he writes:

> Culture is a social inheritance; it consists of ideas that may have developed long before we were born. Our society, for example, has a history reaching beyond any individual's life, the ideas developed over time are taught to each generation and "truth" is anchored in interaction by people long before dead.[155]

The bonding together of generations reveals the clear connection between culture and communication. It is communication that makes culture a continuous process, for once cultural habits, principles, values, attitudes, and the like are formulated, they are communicated to each member of the culture. So strong is the need for a culture to bind each generation to past and future generations that, as Keesing says, "Any break in the learning chain would lead to a culture's disappearance."[156] As you will see in the

next chapter when we examine the place of history and the family in cultures, these two major social institutions ensure each generation "gets the messages" that matter most to the culture.

CULTURE IS BASED ON SYMBOLS

Our discussion of how culture is transmitted from generation to generation allows for an easy transition to discussing the method of that exchange: symbols. Everything we have said up to this point leads to the characteristic that states *culture is based on symbols*. The relationship between culture and symbols is made apparent by Ferraro when he writes, "symbols tie together people who otherwise might not be part of a unified group."[157] The portability of symbols allows people to package and store them as well as transmit them. The mind, books, pictures, films, religious writings, videos, computer accessories, and the like enable a culture to preserve what it deems to be important and worthy of transmission. This makes each individual, regardless of his or her generation, heir to a massive repository of information that has been gathered and maintained in anticipation of his or her entry into the culture.

Cultural symbols can take a host of forms, encompassing gestures, dress, objects, flags, religious icons, and the like. Yet "the most important symbolic aspect of culture is

David Young-Wolff/PhotoEdit

Although all cultures use symbols to share their realities, the specific realities and the symbols employed are often quite different.

REMEMBER THIS

Culture is accumulative, historical, and perceivable.

language—using words to represent objects and ideas."[158] Notice the link between symbols and culture in the definition of the word *symbol* advanced by Macionis: "A symbol is anything that carries a particular meaning recognized by people who share culture."[159] Symbols conveyed through language are so important to a culture that the anthropologist Kluckhohn wrote, "Human culture without language is unthinkable."[160] It is language that enables you to share the speculations, observations, facts, experiments, and wisdom accumulated over thousands of years—what the linguist Weinberg called "the grand insights of geniuses which, transmitted through symbols, enable us to span the learning of centuries."[161] Through language, it is "possible to learn from cumulative, shared experience."[162] Bates and Plog offer an excellent summary of the importance of language to culture:

> Language thus enables people to communicate what they would do if such-and-such happened, to organize their experiences into abstract categories ("a happy occasion," for instance, or an "evil omen"), and to express thoughts never spoken before. Morality, religion, philosophy, literature, science, economics, technology, and numerous other areas of human knowledge and belief—along with the ability to learn about and manipulate them—all depend on this type of higher-level communication.[163]

CULTURE IS DYNAMIC

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus might well have been talking about culture when, more than two thousand years ago, he observed: "You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters are continually flowing in." What he was telling us then is true even today—cultures do not exist in a vacuum; because of "other waters continually flowing in," they are subject to change. As Ethington notes, cultures are in a never-ending "process of reinvention."[164] While cultures have been subject to change since the earliest hunter-gatherers moved from place to place, never in recorded history, as we pointed out earlier in this chapter, have these changes been so widespread and profound. Angrosino notes, "The intensity of change seems to have increased; no longer restricted to isolated historical moments of conflict and crisis, change seems to be pushing us relentlessly."[165] As we previously demonstrated, because of the proliferation of American capitalism, Western values being spread throughout the world, population growth, large movements of immigrants from place to place, globalization, and the constant improvement and proliferation of information technology systems, cultures are in contact with each other in ways never experienced before. Whether it comes in small increments or dramatic bursts, cultural change is now inevitable. Our premise is simple—cultures are subject to fluctuations and seldom remain constant. Luckmann makes this same important point in the following manner:

> Although culture provides strength and stability, it is never static. Cultural groups face continual challenges from such powerful forces as environmental upheavals, plagues, wars, migration, the influx of immigrants, and the growth of new technologies. As a result, cultures change and evolve over time.[166]

We conclude this section on the dynamic nature of culture by mentioning a few ideas about cultural change.

First, because much of culture is habitual and deeply rooted in tradition, you can find countless examples where *change is not welcomed and* is *even greeted with hostility*. In the United States, there are still large numbers of people who rail against women having equal rights with men. And in much of the Arab world, the aggression aimed at the West can be traced to a fear of having American values imposed on traditional Islamic beliefs.

Second, since cultures seek to endure, they often *adopt those outside elements that are compatible with their existing values and beliefs, or that can be modified without causing much disruption*. For example, because of contact via increased commerce, American businesses embraced some Japanese quality control practices. At the same time, the Japanese started using new American marketing techniques.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, although many aspects of culture are subject to change, *the deep structure of a culture resists major alterations*, or as Beamer and Varner note, "Culture appears to remain unchanged at deep levels and only change on the surface. This is front-stage behavior, where popular culture thrives."[167] Changes in dress, music, food, transportation, mass entertainment, housing, and the like are exterior changes and do not go to the root of the culture. However, values and behaviors associated with such things as ethics and morals, hard work, definitions of freedom, the importance of family and the past, religious practices, the pace of life, and attitudes toward gender and age are so deeply embedded in a culture that they persist generation after generation. With regard to religion, Barnlund makes the same point about deep structure changes when he writes, "The spread of Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and Confucianism did not homogenize the societies they enveloped. It was usually the other way around: societies insisted on adapting the religions to their own cultural traditions."[168]

In the United States, studies conducted on American values show that most contemporary core values are similar to the values of the last 250 years. In short, when assessing the degree of change within a culture, you must always consider what is changing. Do not be fooled because people in Beijing dress much like people in Paris or New York, and people all over the world drink Starbucks coffee and eat fried chicken from KFC. These are "front-stage behaviors." Most of what we call culture is below the surface, like an iceberg. You can observe the tip, but there are other dimensions and depths that you cannot see. That is the subterranean level of culture.

CULTURE IS AN INTEGRATED SYSTEM

Throughout this chapter, we have isolated various pieces of culture and talked about them as if they were discrete units. The nature of language makes it impossible to do otherwise; yet in reality, culture functions as an integrated whole—it is, like communication, systemic. In fact, it has been said that if you touch one part of a culture you touch all of that culture. The reason is that culture "is composed of parts that are related to each other."[169] Ferraro points out that "cultures should be thought of as integrated wholes, the parts of which, to some degree, are interconnected with one another. When we view cultures as integrated systems, we can begin to see how particular culture traits fit into the whole system."[170] Hall says it this way: "You touch a culture in one place and everything else is affected."[171] Values toward materialism

will influence family size, the work ethic, spiritual pursuits, and the like. A complex example of the interconnectedness of cultural elements is the civil rights movement in the United States, which began in the 1960s. This movement has brought about changes in housing patterns, discrimination practices, educational opportunities, the legal system, career opportunities, and even communication. This one aspect of culture has altered American attitudes, values, and behaviors. In China, you can observe the same interconnected aspects of culture by looking at Confucianism. Considering this worldview in isolation fails to explain the Chinese mind-set toward the elderly, social harmony, cooperation, and seniority.

We conclude this section on the characteristics of culture by reminding you that the pull of culture begins at birth and continues throughout life—and some cultures say even after life. Using the standard language of her time (sexist by today's standards), famous anthropologist Ruth Benedict offered an excellent explanation of why culture is such a powerful influence on all aspects of human behavior:

> The life history of the individual is first and foremost an accommodation to the patterns and standards traditionally handed down in his community. From the moment of his birth the customs into which he is born shape his experience and behavior. By the time he can talk, he is the little creature of his culture, and by the time he is grown and able to take part in its activities, its habits are his habits, its beliefs his beliefs, its impossibilities his impossibilities. Every child that is born into his group will share them with him, and no child born into the opposite side of the globe can ever achieve the thousandth part.[172]

The important point to take away from our entire discussion of culture is eloquently expressed in the following sentence: "God gave to every people a cup, a cup of clay, and from this cup they drank life. . . . They all dipped in the water, but their cups were different."[173] This book is about how those "different cups" influence how people perceive the world and behave in that world.

Studying Intercultural Communication

If we have been successful in our endeavors, you should now be convinced of two important points. First, learning how to become successful in your future intercultural interactions is a necessary and worthwhile pursuit. Second, culture plays a significant role in how people observe reality and communicate that reality. In our zeal to convince you of these two premises, we might have unintentionally been guilty of overstating the significance of culture in human behavior. Hence, we shall pause for a moment and alert you to some of the problems you will face as you make culture the centerpiece in your study of intercultural communication. Specifically, we will examine (1) the uniqueness of each individual, (2) the perils of stereotyping, (3) the need for objectivity, and (4) the myth of seeing communication as a cure-all.

Individual Uniqueness

The English statesman Lord Chesterfield once wrote, "There never were, since the creation of the world, two cases exactly parallel." He might have also said that there have never been two people exactly alike. The reason is simple: behavior is shaped by a multitude of sources, and culture is just one of those sources. Put in slightly different

terms, *we are more than our cultures*. Although all cultures offer people a common frame of reference, people are not captives of their culture, nor are they subject to all the lessons of that culture. In fact, it is even folly to think of people in terms of being blank slates. As Pinker points out, "The mind cannot be a blank slate, because blank slates don't do anything."[174] Instead, people are thinking, feeling individuals whose biology and history interact and play crucial roles in their social collective behavior. Consequently, the values and behaviors of a particular culture may not be the values and behaviors of all the individuals within that culture. Reflect for a moment on all the potential responses that could be generated by the simple phrase "I am going to the racetrack." It can elicit a wide variety of responses, depending on the listener's background. One person might believe horse racing is an evil form of gambling, another might maintain that horse racing is animal abuse; and yet another, reading the same words, could respond by saying, "I love horse races." As Sitaram and Cogdell remind us, "Reality is not the same for all people."[175] One reason it is not the same is that your genetic makeup, your social group experiences, the language you speak, your gender, age, individual and family history, political affiliation, educational level, perceptions of others, and current circumstances, the region and neighborhood where you grew up, your religious experiences, and many other factors are at play every moment of your life. All of these factors (along with culture) form your individual personality. Hooker does an excellent job of drawing attention to the interplay of personality and culture, and the hazards of only relying on culture when studying intercultural communication, when he writes:

> **REMEMBER THIS**
>
> *It is important to be cautious and prudent when making cultural generalizations.*

> Personality consists of the traits that are unique to an individual human being. It is partly genetic and partly learned. Because much of personality is acquired, it is strongly influenced by culture. Yet a very wide range of personalities can develop within a given culture, whence the danger of placing too much emphasis on 'national character.'[176]

What we have been stressing is that although all learned behavior takes place within a cultural setting, every person has a unique personality. Therefore, you must be cautious and prudent when making cultural generalizations. What we said earlier is worth repeating: as you study intercultural communication, always keep in mind that culture is a powerful force in the shaping of human behavior, but people are more than their cultures.

Stereotyping

When people from other cultures conclude that all Americans wear baseball hats everywhere they go and eat mostly fast food, they are engaging in stereotypes. When Americans conclude that Germans and Irish spend most of their time drinking beer and singing old folk songs in beer halls and pubs, they are engaged in stereotyping. And when people say that Muslims do not have time to do anything but pray because they

pray five times a day, they are engaging in stereotyping. While our three examples seem foolish, let us assure you that we have heard them expressed on numerous occasions. These examples are representative of an endless number of cultural stereotypes people use when talking about other groups. Just what are stereotypes? Stereotypes are a collection of false assumptions that people in all cultures make about the characteristics of members of various groups. Notice the words "people in all cultures" in the last sentence. It is because, as Peoples and Bailey note, "Every society has stereotypes concerning members of other societies and of ethic and racial groups."[177] Cultural stereotypes are popular because they are easy to create. When repeated with enough regularity, they become a shorthand that represents an entire collection of people. As you would suspect, the link between studying intercultural communication and stereotypes is one that needs to be identified and examined. Scarborough points out this link when he writes, "When we generalize about a group of people, as we do in describing a culture, we confront the issue of stereotyping."[178]

While we grant that stereotyping can be a problem when studying intercultural communication, you can take certain precautions to minimize the damaging effects of stereotyping. First, cultural generalizations must be viewed as approximations, not as absolute representations. Your personal experiences have taught you that people often do not follow the prescribed and accepted modes of cultural behavior. You may read about conformity as a trait of the Japanese people, but while in Tokyo see a group of motorcycle riders dressed like the Hell's Angels. In instances such as these, remember the admonition of the English writer Robert Burton: "No rule is so general, which admits not some exception."

Second, when you make generalizations they should deal with what Scarborough refers to as "core values."[179] These are the values and behaviors that occur with enough regularity and over a long enough period of time that they clearly mark the members of a particular culture. If you examine the dominant culture of the United States, you would have little trouble noticing the importance placed on individualism in everything from dress to outward behavior. In the same manner, you could begin to get insight into the role of women in Saudi Arabia by noticing the complete absence of women in public demonstrations. What is true of the two core cultural values used in these examples is also a worthy guideline for generalizing about behavior. While there might be exceptions, greeting behavior in Mexico (people embracing) is different from greeting behavior in India (people bowing) or in the United States (people shaking hands). These kinds of behaviors are recognizable because of their consistency over an extended period, usually involving generation after generation.

Finally, conclusions and statements about cultures should be qualified so they do not appear to be absolutes, but only cautious generalizations. Coles suggests phrases such as "on average," "more likely," and "tend to" as a way of moderating the generalization being advanced.[180] These sorts of qualifiers allow you to think about and talk about other cultures without implying that every member of the group is exactly alike. We should also add that the validity of the generalization often shifts from culture to culture. That is to say, if the culture is somewhat homogeneous, such as that of Japanese and Koreans, references to group characteristics tend be more accurate. As Hall points out, however, conclusions about the people of the United States are far more difficult because of the variety of regions and ethnic groups and the emphasis on individualism.[181]

Because of the significance of stereotyping to the study of intercultural communication, we plan to revisit the topic throughout the remainder of the book.

IMAGINE THIS

Mr. Thomas was senior vice president of a major oil company that had recently purchased a competing company and was now about to merge the two businesses into a single large international firm. His company sent Mr. Thomas to Kenya for an indefinite time so he could institute all of the major changes needed to make the operation work smoothly and be profitable. He wanted to make a good impression and establish friendly relationships with all his staff—a staff that was composed of people from many parts of the world. Mr. Thomas called his new employees into his office individually so that he could build rapport with them on a one-to-one basis. Below is a summary of some of his encounters, none of which produced the results Mr. Thomas wanted.

a. *As an employee from China was leaving the office after a very productive visit, Mr. Thomas said, "It was nice working with you. You remind me of all the people I worked with when I was in Japan."*

b. *Mr. Thomas noticed a strange look on the face of the assistant manager from Germany when he said, "Remember, this is an informal company. No suits and ties, and we will call everyone by their first name."*

c. *When the worker from Saudi Arabia arrived for the one-on-one meeting, the first thing Mr. Thomas said was "How are your wife and family?"*

d. *The administrator from Bolivia was reminded that this new company "runs a tight ship" and that "all work had to be completed on time."*

e. *Mr. Thomas told his new American administrative assistant that one of her duties would involve preparing coffee for all the executives.*

f. *When meeting the new foreman from Kuwait, Mr. Thomas greeted him by shaking hands with the left hand.*

g. *Mr. Thomas's advice to the Japanese manager was to make sure his opinions were expressed in forceful terms at all their staff meetings.*

What went wrong?

Objectivity

Our next consideration when studying intercultural communication involves the issue of *objectivity*. Objectivity is one of those concepts that is easier to talk about than to attain. The very definition of objectivity ("The state of being objective, just, unbiased and not influenced by emotions or personal prejudices"[182]) should alert you to the difficulty of

REMEMBER THIS

Ethnocentrism is found in all cultures. It is the basis for judging all other cultures combined with the belief that one's own culture is superior to others.

trying to communicate with other people while suspending personal judgment. The problem, of course, is complicated when you engage in intercultural communication, since you approach and respond to other cultures from the perspective of your own culture—and often, consciously or unconsciously, presume your culture is better than all others. This method of using your own culture as the anchor for assessing other cultures is called *ethnocentrism.* Ferraro expands on the definition of ethnocentrism: "Ethnocentrism [is] the belief that one's own culture is superior to all others. In other words, it means viewing the rest of the world through the narrow lens of one's own culture."[183] Chiu and Hong emphasize the hazards of ethnocentrism to intercultural communication when they write:

> When people use the manner in which other cultures are similar or dissimilar to their own culture as the basis for judging other cultures, they may see the elements of their own culture as normal, moral, and desirable, and the elements of cultures that differ from their own culture as abnormal, immoral, and undesirable.[184]

As you can judge from what we have said so far, trying to be objective is no simple assignment. For example, it is difficult, if not impossible, to see and to give meaning to words and behaviors with which you are not familiar. How, for example, do you make sense of someone's silence if you come from a culture that does not value silence? You might make the mistake of thinking, "How could someone be so insensitive as to be silent at a time like this?" Your ethnocentrism can therefore impede intercultural communication.

Objectivity also requires the elimination of both overt and subtle hostility. Negative behavior not only is contrary to the ideals of most cultures but also cripples both the perpetrators of the behavior and the target. To discriminate against someone simply because he or she has skin of a different color, lives in a different country, prays to a different god, has a dissimilar worldview, or speaks a different language diminishes everyone. Our view about appreciating and accepting differences is clearly expressed in the following: ". . . diversity need not divide; . . . the fear of difference is a fear of the future; . . . inclusiveness rightly understood and rightly practiced is a benefit and not a burden."[185] To achieve those benefits, it will take all the people of the world working together to achieve a truly multicultural society, a world in which you endeavor to follow the advice of Weinberg when he exhorts you to learn to value discrete groups of people regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, country of origin, gender, or sexual preference.[186]

Communication is not a Cure-all

We are sure that you have learned that there are countless situations in your life where no amount of talk can erase hard feelings or clarify misunderstandings. Yet we have seen too many communication textbooks, celebrated motivational gurus, and self-help tapes that expound on the virtues of communication as a solution to and panacea for what plagues the individual and society. While we would grant that communication is

a valuable tool for resolving numerous interpersonal problems, we need to make it clear early in our book that we are not going to suggest that communication can solve all problems. In fact, there are even occasions when communication can cause problems. Wood, in the following paragraph, joins us in warning you about the false hope often granted to communication:

> Yet it would be a mistake to think communication is a cure-all. Many problems can't be solved by talk alone. Communication by itself won't end hunger, abuses of human rights around the globe, racism, intimate partner violations, or physical diseases.[187]

It has not been our intent to discourage you by offering these four warnings about the study of intercultural communication. Our mission has simply been to alert you to some of the potential problems facing anyone who takes on a topic as large and complex as intercultural communication. However, now that we have offered the four admonitions, we are ready to begin the process of improving the manner in which you interact with people from cultures different from your own.

Preview of the Book

We have divided this book into eleven interrelated chapters. In Chapter 1, we have introduced you to the need for, and challenges of, studying intercultural communication. This first chapter also established the connection between human communication and culture. We concluded by alerting you to some problems inherent in studying intercultural communication.

In Chapter 2, we will move to the topic of social organizations. Specifically, we will examine the role of the family and community in social perception and communication.

Chapter 3 explores the deep structure of culture by looking at how a culture's worldview (religion) influences the manner in which members perceive matters related to gender, ethics, suffering, life, death, and the like.

In Chapter 4, the issue is cultural identity—the way it is formed and its impact on perception and communication.

Chapter 5 examines the cultural patterns and values that shape human behavior. Numerous cultural comparisons are presented to illustrate the link between cultural patterns and intercultural interaction.

In Chapters 6 and 7, we move from the theoretical to the practical by analyzing the symbols of intercultural interaction, both verbal and nonverbal. Chapter 6 looks at how language is used in intercultural interactions and ways in which it is often employed differently depending on the culture. Chapter 7 canvasses the effect of cultural diversity on nonverbal communication and the ways nonverbal messages support verbal communication in a variety of cultures.

Chapters 8, 9, and 10 acknowledge the importance of two communication principles: first, that communication is rule governed, and second, that those rules are often tied to a particular cultural context. Our investigation looks at cultural variations in the business (Chapter 8), education (Chapter 9), and health care (Chapter 10) settings.

Chapter 11, the final chapter in the book, is concerned with learning how to live successfully in another culture by developing intercultural competence, learning how to adapt to a new culture, and integrating the ethical implications of intercultural interaction. In a sense, our entire study focuses on the issue of improvement, but in Chapter 11, specific advice and recommendations are set forth.

SUMMARY

- Intercultural communication presents you with a challenge you must meet if you are to become an effective communicator in today's world.
- New and improved technology, growth in the world's population, and shifts in the global economic arena have contributed to increased international contacts. Everyone worldwide will be affected by and need to communicate about finite natural resources and the environment to help reduce and avoid international conflict.
- Domestic contacts are increasing because new immigrants and co-cultures are growing in numbers.
- Intercultural communication is communication between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough to alter the communication event.
- All cultures have a dominant or national culture that is normally defined by examining the people who control the power within the culture.
- Co-cultural communication is communication between members who hold two or more divergent cultural experiences that might influence the communication process.
- Communication accomplishes many interpersonal needs, helps establish personal identities, and has an influence on people.
- Communication is a dynamic process in which people attempt to share their internal states with other people through the use of symbols.
- Communication is dynamic, symbolic, contextual, self-reflective, learned, and has a consequence.
- Culture and communication are so intertwined that it is easy to think that culture is communication and communication is culture.
- Culture is a set of human-made objective and subjective elements that in the past have increased the probability of survival.
- Culture seeks to inform its members what to expect from life, and therefore reduces confusion and helps them predict what to expect from life.
- The elements that compose a culture are history, religion, values, social organizations, and language.
- Culture is learned, shared, and transmitted from generation to generation, based on symbols and a dynamic and integrated system.
- Some of the problems with studying intercultural communication involve individual uniqueness, stereotyping, lack of objectivity, and viewing communication as a cure-all.

ACTIVITIES

1. Explain the following statement: "In studying other cultures, we do so very often from the perspective of our own culture."[188]
2. Explain how changes in technology, the new global economy, and increases in the world's population might affect you.
3. Explain how and why communication and culture are linked.
4. Explain the following statement: "When studying intercultural communication, you should be aware of the problems associated with individual uniqueness, stereotyping, objectivity, and assuming communication is a cure-all."
5. Explain what is meant by the phrase "Communication is contextual." Can you think of examples of how context has influenced your behavior?

DISCUSSION IDEAS

1. In small groups, discuss national or domestic news stories from the past week to determine under what circumstances cultures encountering one another display communication.
2. In small groups, discuss your interpretation of the following quote: "Globalization is political, technological, and cultural, as well as economic."
3. In small groups, identify your culture or co-culture.
4. Discuss with other members of your class the types of communication problems that have occurred when you have interacted with people from cultures different from your own.
5. Explain how these difficulties have made you feel.
6. In small groups, discuss the various ways in which the dominant culture influences and controls the values, attitudes, and behavior of co-cultures.
7. In small groups, discuss the following topic: "We are alike and we are different." Have the group produce one list that describes how two different ethnic groups are alike and another list that specifies how they are different.
8. In small groups, discuss how changes in the demographics of the United States have affected you. How do you believe these changes will ultimately affect society?

CHAPTER 2

The Deep Structure of Culture: Roots of Reality

In every conceivable manner, the family is a link to our past and a bridge to our future.

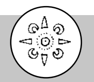
ALEX HALEY

History is philosophy teaching by example.

HENRY ST. JOHN BOLINGBROKE

Let us begin with a series of questions. Why do members of some cultures seek solitude, whereas those of other cultures feel despondent if they are not continuously in the company of other people? Why do some cultures frantically cling to youth, whereas others welcome old age and even death? Why do some cultures worship the earth, whereas others molest it? Why do some cultures seek material possessions, while others believe them to be a hindrance to a peaceful life? Why do some cultures believe great insight can be found only in silence, while others trust that words contain the world's great wisdom? These and countless other such questions need to be answered if you are to understand how people from different cultures see the world, live in that world, and communicate with other people about that world. We believe that in the study of intercultural communication it is not enough to simply know that some people bow, whereas others shake hands, or that some see exchanging gifts as an important part of a business transaction, while others perceive it as bribery. Although these specific behaviors are significant, it is far more important to know what motivates them. We believe the key to why a culture views the world as it does can be found in that culture's *deep structure*. It is this deep structure, the unconscious assumptions about how the world works, that unifies a culture, makes each culture unique, and explains the "how" and "why" of a culture's collective action. The topics of deep structure are sources of insight because they deal with issues such as God, nature, and death.

At the core of any culture's deep structure are its *social organizations*. These organizations, sometimes referred to as *social institutions*, are the groups that members of a culture turn to for lessons about the meaning of life and methods for living that life. Thousands of years ago, as cultures became more and more advanced and grew in population, they began to realize that there was a need to organize in a collective manner. As Haviland and his colleagues observed, "Just as cooperation is basic to human survival, the social organization of groups is basic to cooperation."[1] Bates and Plog repeat this important notion about social organizations when they note, "Our ability to work in cooperation with others in large social groupings and coordinate the activities of many people to achieve particular purposes is a vital part of human adaptation."[2] There are a number of groups within every culture that help with that adaptation process while also giving members of that particular culture guidance on how to behave. The three most enduring and influential social organizations that deal with deep structure issues are (1) *family*, (2) *state* (community), and (3) *religion* (worldview). These three social organizations, working in concert, define, create, transmit, maintain, and reinforce the basic and most crucial elements of every culture. Not only do these institutions have a long history, but as Houseknecht and Pankhurst note, even today they remain the "essential components of modern life."[3]

REMEMBER THIS 

A culture's deep structure, its unconscious assumptions about how the world operates, is what unifies a culture, makes each culture unique, and explains the "how" and "why" of a culture's collective action.

Before starting our detailed examinations of these institutions, we should add that they go by a variety of names. For example, a larger analysis of religion would embrace spirituality and a culture's worldview. And when we speak of community in the cultural sense, we also include concepts that are related to country, state, and the history of the culture. Regardless of what we call the three deep structure institutions, they form the roots of every culture and provide the fundamental values and attitudes that are most critical to that culture. In this chapter, we look at how family and state help shape the social perceptions and communication behaviors of members in a particular culture. In the next chapter, our topic will be worldview and religion. And in Chapter 4, we examine some of the essential values generated by these social organizations.

The Deep Structure of Culture

Although many communication problems occur on the interpersonal level, most serious confrontations and misunderstandings can be traced to cultural differences that go to the core of a culture. In the United States, when members of the racist sect known as the Aryan Nations engage in violence against Jews on the Fourth of July,[4] when "a lunchroom fight pitting Arab and non-Arab students turns into an all-out brawl,"[5] and when thousands of American Indians protest the use of Indian names for mascots or nicknames,[6] it is the deep structure of culture that is being manifested. Elsewhere in the world we find similar examples of strife that is rooted in the deep structure elements of a culture. News reports proliferate with stories of the ongoing persecution of the Kurds in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. In Kosovo, the ethnic Albanians declare independence from Serbia—not for economic reasons, but for cultural reasons. In China we observe "ethnic clashes between Han Chinese and the Muslim Hui."[7] Israel and much of the Arab world

continue a deep structure dispute that goes back thousands of years. And in 2007 in Darfur, an estimated ten thousand people a month died in the name of ethnic cleansing.[8] There is also a long history of Christians facing oppression around the world.[9] We are suggesting that whenever there are ethnic and cultural confrontations in Boston, Belfast, Beirut, Burundi, or Bombay, the deep structure of culture is being acted out.

Although many of our examples have a long history, Huntington speaks to the future of intercultural contact and the potential problems that can arise when cultural deep structure beliefs clash: "The great divisions among humankind and the dominating sources of conflict will be cultural."[10] What Huntington says next summarizes the basic theme of this book, as well as the rationale for this chapter:

> The people of different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife, as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy.[11]

Please notice that all the issues Huntington cites, as well as the examples we provide, penetrate into the very heart of culture. They are what we call in this chapter the deep structure of a culture. Such issues (God, loyalty, duty, family and kinship, community, state, allegiance, etc.) have been part of every culture for thousands of years. In fact, anthropologists believe that when the world's first cultures formed—over forty thousand years ago—these same elements were at the core of those cultures. Haviland and his associates note that during the Upper Paleolithic period, the earliest expressions of culture started to appear. These primitive manifestations indicated an interest in spiritual practices, "the importance of kinship," and "communities."[12] Hence, we express once again our belief that to understand any culture, it is these three deep structure elements that must be studied. As Delgado points out, "Culture produces and is reproduced by institutions of society, and we can turn to such sites to help recreate and represent the elements of culture."[13] The aim of this chapter is to look at those "sites" so that you might better understand how and why cultures have different visions of the world. We would suggest three interrelated reasons why family, community, and religion hold such a prominent sway over the actions of all cultures. Let us look at these three so that you can begin to appreciate the importance of a culture's deep structure to any study of intercultural communication.

Deep Structure Institutions Carry a Culture's Most Important Beliefs

The three institutions of family, state, and religion carry the messages that matter most to people. Your parents, community, and religion are given the task of teaching you what is important and what you should strive for. Whether you seek material possessions to attain happiness or choose instead to seek spiritual fulfillment, the three deep structure institutions help you make major decisions and choices regarding how to live your life. These institutions tell you how you fit into the grand scheme of things, whether you should believe in fate or the power of free choice, notions about right and wrong, why there is suffering, what to expect from life, where your loyalties should reside, and even how to prepare for death. Peoples and Bailey, also speaking about the important knowledge supplied by culture's social institutions, maintain that these are

the components "about the world and society that children learn while growing up."[14] Moreover, as we have suggested, these central "messages" are generated and transmitted by family, community, and church.

Deep Structure Institutions and their Messages Endure

The three institutions that compose a culture's deep structure endure. From the time when early Cro-Magnon cave drawings appeared in southern France until the present, we can trace the strong pull of family, community, and religion. Generations of children are told about Abraham, Confucius, Moses, the Buddha, Christ, Muhammad, and other spiritual leaders. Whether it is the Eightfold Path, the Ten Commandments, the Analects, the Five Pillars of Islam, or the Vedas, the meanings of these writings survive. Just as every American knows about the values conveyed by the story of the Revolutionary War, every Mexican is aware of the consequences of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Likewise, in Japan children are still taught the importance of the Meiji Restoration of 1868.

The enduring qualities of the major institutions of culture, along with the messages those institutions carry, work together to preserve cultures. Each generation is given the wisdom, traditions, and customs that make a culture unique. As students of intercultural communication, however, you need to be aware that often the deep-seated hatreds that turn one culture against another also endure. We see vivid examples of the longevity of bitterness and revenge in all parts of the world. In Europe we see "600 years of violent nationalism that has bloodied the Balkans."[15] Fighting and death have been the rule in the Middle East for thousands of years. In short, the violent clashes in the Sudan, the ongoing religious disputes in the Holy Land, and Pakistan's decision to name its first nuclear bomb after a sixth-century martyr who fought against India all manifest the sad truth that hatred and distrust endure.

Deep Structure Institutions and their Messages are Deeply Felt

The content generated by these institutions, and the institutions themselves, arouse deep and emotional feelings. Look around the world and you can observe deeply rooted loyalty and nationalism on every continent. We all saw the emotional response associated with deep structure issues when a Danish newspaper printed caricatures of the prophet Muhammad that millions of Muslims found offensive because most Muslims consider any depiction of the prophet to be sacrilegious. Days of rioting followed in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Indonesia, and many other countries. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims took to the streets "demonstrating against the cartoons by burning, trampling and spitting on Danish flags while chanting 'God is Great' and 'Down with Denmark.'"[16] Moreover, think for a moment about the fierce reactions that can be produced in the United States when someone takes God's name in vain, calls someone's mother an obscene name, or burns the American flag. We even saw candidates in the 2008 presidential campaign discussing who was and was not wearing an American flag pin on his or her clothing. Countries and religious causes have been able to send young men and women to war, and politicians have attempted to win

elections, by inciting people to recognize the importance of God, country, and family. Regardless of the culture, in any hierarchy of cultural values we would find love of family, God, and country at the top of the list.

Deep Structure Institutions Supply much of a Person's Identity

One of the most important responsibilities of any culture is to assist its members in forming their identities. You are not born with an identity, but through countless interactions you discover who you are, how you fit in, and where to find security. Charon makes much the same point when he notes, "We learn our identities—who we are—through socialization."[17] Recall that in Chapter 1 we stated that socialization takes place within a cultural context. When you encounter other people, you begin to develop a variety of identities. As Huntington points out, "Everyone has multiple identities which may compete with or reinforce each other: kinship, occupational, cultural, institutional, territorial, educational, partisan, ideological, and others."[18] These and countless other memberships help define you. However, the most significant identities, and the ones that mean the most, are filtered through deep structure institutions. In this sense culture—through family, church, and state—becomes the defining feature in your identity. At some point in your life, you move from identities based only on the "I" ("How attractive am I?" "Am I a good student?") to identities linked to the "we." That is to say, you begin to realize you have shared identities. As Gudykunst and Kim note, ethnic and cultural identities are "those views of ourselves that we assume we share with others in our in-groups."[19] What is important is that you begin to see yourself as part of a larger unit. Kakar explains this transition in the following manner:

> At some point of time in early life, the child's "I am!" announces the birth of a sense of community. "I am" differentiates me from other individuals. "We are" makes me aware of the other dominant group (or groups) sharing the physical and cognitive space of my community.[20]

As you can see, this "we" identity connects the individual to cultural groups and the main institutions of the culture. According to Huntington, "People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions."[21]

You can observe that Huntington's catalog is essentially the same as our list of family, church, and state. Put in slightly different terms, when you think about yourself, you most likely conclude that you are a member of a family ("my name is Jane Smith"), that you have a religious orientation ("I am a Christian"), and that you live in the United States ("I am from Idaho").

Regardless of their culture, individuals identify themselves as members of these cultural organizations. Those different identities are important to the study of intercultural communication because, according to Guirdham, they "can be used to identify similarities and differences in behaviors, interpretations, and norms."[22] Lynch and Hanson agree with Guirdham when they point out, "A person's cultural identity exerts a profound influence on his or her lifeways."[23] In Chapter 4, we will provide a more in-depth examination of how your cultural identity is developed and acted out.

Family

The Chinese say that if you know the family, you do not need to know the individual. There is a Jewish adage that states, "God could not be everywhere and therefore he made mothers." In Africa the saying is, "A person who has children does not die." And in the United States children are told, "The apple does not fall far from the tree." Although these ideas might differ slightly, they all call attention to the importance of family in every human being's life. The family is the oldest and most fundamental of all human institutions. It is also a universal experience found in every culture.[24] Kim endorses these same notions when she notes, "The family is the basic unit of society and it is at the heart of its survival."[25] You constantly see governments evolving, and even disappearing, in places like Iran, Iraq, China, the old Soviet Union, and numerous countries in Africa, yet in each of these nations the "families survive."[26]

Because it has survived for thousands of years, the family unit "is a very effective means of providing social regulation and continuity."[27] Nye and Berardo even suggest that "without the family, human society as we know it could not exist."[28]

The Importance of Family

The seventeenth-century English cleric Charles Colton offered an excellent introduction to the importance of family when he noted, "The family is the most basic unit of government. As the first community to which a person is attached and the first authority under which a person learns to live, the family establishes society's most basic values." He is saying that the individual, the family, and the culture work together to teach the "essentials" of the culture. Smith and Mosby underscore this point when they write, "The family is the most prominent social group that exists. It prepares its members for the various roles they will perform in society."[29] The reason family is such

Paul Conklin/PhotoEdit

The family is one of the social institutions of a culture that have the task of passing on the culture from generation to generation.

a crucial social organization is highlighted by Galvin and Brommel: "We are born into a family, mature in a family, form new families, and leave them at our death."[30] Perhaps the importance and power of this union is most manifest in the idea that the family is charged with transforming a biological organism into a human being who must spend the rest of his or her life around other human beings. It is the family that greets you once you leave the comfort of the womb. In this sense the family is the first and chief socializing agent. As DeGenova and Rice point out:

> The family is the principal transmitter of knowledge, values, attitudes, roles, and habits from one generation to the next. Through word and example, the family shapes a child's personality and instills modes of thought and ways of acting that become habitual.[31]

The significance of family is eloquently highlighted by Swerdlow, Bridenthal, Kelly, and Vine: "Here is where one has the first experience of love, and of hate, of giving, and of denying; and of deep sadness. . . . Here the first hopes are raised and met—or disappointed. Here is where one learns whom to trust and whom to fear. Above all, family is where people get their start in life."[32]

Definition of Family

Because familial patterns evolve over time, it is difficult to arrive at a single definition of what constitutes a family. Haviland, Prins, Walrath, and McBride speak to this problem when they note, "Comparative historical and cross-cultural studies reveal a wide variety of family patterns and these patterns may change over time."[33] We will look at some of those patterns in the next section of this chapter.

In spite of the variety of family forms, most experts have agreed on a general definition that is broad enough to include polygamists, same-sex marriages, single parents, and unwed mothers. The definition advanced by Noller and Fitzpatrick is general enough to include all those configurations while at the same time being broad enough to be non-ethnocentric. They define family as "a group of intimates, who generate a sense of home and group identity, complete with strong ties of loyalty and emotion, and an experience of a history and a future."[34]

Forms of Family

As we have already indicated, while all cultures deem family to be one of their most important institutions, the form and type of the family is, as Haviland and colleagues note, "related to distinct social, historical, and ecological circumstances."[35] Yet even with some cultural variations, most people encounter two families during the course of their life: the family they are born into (the family of orientation) and the family that is formed when and if they take a mate. Kinship bonds link these two families into more complex family systems.

In the last few decades, families throughout the world have undergone numerous changes that have altered the two so-called standard forms of family. Before turning to those alterations, let us briefly mention the two most common forms of families found in most cultures. The two types are *nuclear* ("typically identified as a parent or parents and a child or children") and *extended* ("typically includes grandparents and relatives").[36]

NUCLEAR FAMILIES

Nuclear families, often referred to as "two-generation families," are the most typical pattern found in North America, and they are becoming increasingly common in other developed nations. Ferraro offers an excellent summary of nuclear families when he writes, "The everyday needs of economic support, child care, and social interaction are with the nuclear family itself rather than by a wider set of relatives."[37] The nuclear family, like all of the deep structure institutions, manifests many of the values of a culture. For example, the nuclear family is usually characterized by a great deal of geographic mobility[38]—a trait found in the American culture ever since the founding of the country. Cultural values of the nuclear family are even reflected in child-rearing practices. According to Triandis, "there is less regimentation and less emphasis on obedience, while exploration and creativity are encouraged."[39] American cultural values toward, and treatment of, the elderly are likewise replicated in nuclear families. In these families, older members of the family do not normally spend their twilight years in the homes of their children. As Haviland, Prins, Walrath, and McBride point out, "Retirement communities and nursing homes provide these services, and to take aged parents into one's home is commonly regarded as not only an economic burden but also a threat to the household's privacy and independence."[40]

EXTENDED FAMILIES

As we briefly mentioned earlier, extended families, commonly found in developing and undeveloped nations, consist of more than just parents and children; they often include children, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and even godparents. Historically, these collections of relatives have gathered for economic reasons and usually share the workload and the raising of children. In an extended family, you can often observe a different set of behaviors and values being acted out than are found in nuclear families. For

Patrick Olear/PhotoEdit

Extended families connect a great many generations (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) into a single unit.

REMEMBER THIS

An extended family is composed of related nuclear families gathered together into a larger domestic unit.

instance, "extended families insist on obedience and are more organized around rules than are nuclear families."[41] Regardless of the culture or the configuration, the family teaches you your culture and "provides you with the foundation of your self-concept and communication competencies."[42]

CHANGING FAMILIES IN THE UNITED STATES

To this point we have only mentioned nuclear and extended families. It would be extremely misleading if we concluded our discussion without mentioning the wide range of families currently found in the United States. American culture, for a host of reasons, has seen families change in structure and form during the last four decades. It might be useful to mention a few of those changes before we move into a more detailed analysis of how child-rearing practices affect communication.

We begin by repeating this declaration: there are fewer "typical" American families in the United States than ever before. For centuries the "Judeo-Christian tradition, the law, and societal attitudes converged into a fairly common expectation about what form the American family should take."[43] Social changes in the United States, however, have forced people to rethink the definition and configuration of what is a family. Most of these changes, according to Strong, DeVault, and Cohen, were brought about by the following four factors: "(1) economic changes, (2) technological innovations, (3) demographics, and (4) gender roles and opportunities for women."[44] Because of these changes, the United States is now home to some of the family types shown below:

- A single parent with two children
- A heterosexual woman and man who have cohabited for five years, have one child, but have never married
- Two gay men who have cohabited for nine years and have adopted two children
- A single woman who has adopted a child from Korea
- A divorced man who lives with his mother and two of his three children from a prior marriage
- Two lesbians in an intimate relationship who each brought a child into the relationship from a previous heterosexual marriage[45]

There are, of course, more types of families in the United States than those shown above. The United States Census Bureau estimates that only about 49.7 percent of all families contain male/female married couples.[46] In short, the American family has been reshaped. Some of the redesigns involve ethnicity and culture, which relate directly to this book.

After reviewing the research on intercultural and interracial marriages, Frame offered the following conclusion: "Over the last three decades there has been an unprecedented increase in interracial and intercultural marriages."[47] This increase has lead Lamanna and Riedman to estimate that "The child population of the United States is more racially and ethnically diverse than the adult population and will become even more diverse in the future.[48] Just in the area of interracial marriages, a Stanford University study calculated

that "more than 7 percent of the America's 59 million married couples were interracial, compared to less than two percent in 1970."[49] Thus, we conclude this section the way we began it, with a reminder that the structure and workings of American families have experienced major transformations that affect intercultural communication.

CONSIDER THIS

Why do you think there are so many different forms of families throughout the world?

GLOBALIZATION AND FAMILIES

To this point we have discussed how families in the United States have changed in the last four decades. For a variety of reasons, families throughout the rest of the world are also encountering forces that are changing how they look and function. The catalysts for many of the worldwide shifts in family structure can be found in *globalization*. Although we discussed globalization in Chapter 1, and will revisit the concept when we examine international business in Chapter 8, it is important that we also look at how this phenomenon influences families. In short, we agree with McGregor when she writes, "The phenomenon of globalization covers a wide variety of changes in various aspects of social, cultural, political, religious, and economic life."[50]

The pervasiveness of globalization is stated by Tetzlaff in the following manner: "Globalization has become what is probably the most talked about theme of the 1990s in the Western social sciences. Though to many it appears simply a magical buzzword, it does graphically convey the process of trans-border enmeshment from which modern-day world society has resulted."[51] It is obvious that one of results of what Tetzlaff calls "enmeshment" is a growing interdependence among all the peoples of the world. As we have stressed since the first page of this book, people are linked together economically, socially, and environmentally. The concept of globalization is simply another way to talk about that linking process.

In spite of many of the positive aspects of globalization (such as increased free trade, global mass media, ease and speed of transportation, economic interdependence, and improved technology), some of its effects have altered the idea of traditional families for millions of people. The two characteristics of globalization that have been most responsible for those changes are (1) *mass media* and (2) *migration*.

Mass Media. One of the many expressions of globalization has been the explosion of mass media across cultures. As we pointed out in Chapter 1, billions of people can now be in contact with one another through evolving satellite applications. And part of that contact goes to the heart of family life. Accessing these new technologies (satellites, wireless Internet, etc.) is easy; documenting their specific impact on families is hard. Yet the following question is worth posing and pondering: what happens when a culture with a well-established set of family values is exposed to a different set of values that are introduced by media from another culture? Think for a moment about what you see on American television and in American films as it applies to modesty, the judgment of beauty, materialism, violence, and competition. As you shall see in Chapter 5, these five common American values are not

universal. However, families in all parts of the globe are seeing images that stress nudity instead of modesty; anorexic thinness instead of health; cars, clothes and money instead of spirituality; competitiveness instead of cooperation; and assertiveness instead of social harmony. We are not suggesting that one set of values is better than another, but rather are making the point that globalized media sources have created an alternative set of values that are now offered to families throughout the world. Many of these families are struggling to blend traditional patterns with the new ones being thrust upon them by globalization. As Ingoldby and Smith point out, "Families around the world are richly varied, responding to rapid social and demographic changes, and both maintaining and adapting traditional ways of life to present-day circumstances and demands."[52]

Migration. Globalization has created a world where millions of workers leave their families and move from one country to another to seek jobs or higher wages. In this sense, "migration is one way that men and women try to escape poverty."[53] However, when they "escape," they often transform the makeup and character of their family. As Hefti clearly states, "Migration has an impact on the social lives of both the migrants and the families they left behind."[54] These are often extended families where for centuries the mother and the father have taken an active role in child rearing. However, when the father or mother migrates to another country seeking work, the entire dynamic of the family changes. Throughout the Philippines, mothers leave home to take low-paying jobs in Hong Kong in order to support their families, as Basker reports:

> Many of the Filipino *amahs* [maids] here are mothers who have left their husbands and children to come and work as maids—six days a week—for less than the equivalent in United States currency of $400 a month.[55]

Unfortunately, according to Hefti, the personal closeness of the family "deteriorates due to the long separation."[56]

The family breakups caused by economic migration, and the consequences of such moves, are not confined to one culture. The lure of jobs north of the porous U.S.–Mexican border has created a situation where millions of Mexicans and Central Americans, as well as South Americans, have come, both legally and illegally, to the United States in search of employment. When this happens, as Bunim points out, "it is the families that suffer the greatest consequences."[57] The central question behind all these instances is *what happens to the core family values as people leave their traditional families in search of employment?* It may take decades to answer this question, but at least we can conclude that many long-standing family practices are now in a state of flux.

CONSIDER THIS

Families are changing because of globalization, modernization, and a shift in traditional values. How do you think these changes might influence

a. Gender roles?

b. Treatment of the elderly?

c. Socialization of young children?

d. Family communication patterns?

e. Family size?

Functions of the Family

All families, regardless of type or form, have a similar list of important functions that they carry out. Nearly all of these functions are intended to teach the new members of the culture, from the moment of birth, what they need to know so that they can survive and live in societal harmony. In this sense, cultures use the family as one of their social institutions to tutor people "in patterned and predictable ways of thinking and behaving—beliefs, values, attitudes, and norms that are organized around vital aspects of group life and serve essential social functions."[58] Let us look at some of these functions so that you can have a greater appreciation of just how powerful the family is in shaping how its members become one kind of human being rather than another.

REPRODUCTION

The first and most important function is that of reproduction. "Families are in charge of reproduction to keep the society going."[59] As simple and obvious as it sounds, this essential function allows a culture to perpetuate itself by rearing children to replace the older members of the culture that pass away. Without the infusion of new life, the culture would soon disappear.

TEACHING ECONOMIC VALUES

An important task given to all families is the teaching of economic sharing and responsibility. While the methods for generating goods and services, and even the means of disruption, vary from culture to culture, "virtually every family engages in activities aimed at providing for such practical needs as food, clothing, and shelter."[60] Later in the chapter you will notice how variations in family economic functions often teach important cultural values such as materialism, thrift, sharing, and hard work.

SOCIALIZATION

As we mentioned in Chapter 1, the family is one of the "teachers" that pass on the culture from generation to generation. Part of that instruction involves "teaching children how to fit into their particular culture."[61] This means sculpting the child's behavior to conform to established norms and customs. Ingoldsby and Smith summarize this task in the following manner: "In other words, society depends on the parents to love and nurture their children, to toilet-train them and teach them to speak and otherwise act in what would be considered a civilized manner.[62]

TEACHING CORE VALUES AND WORLDVIEW

As we discuss elsewhere, a culture's core values and worldview come from a variety of sources, yet it is the family, as the first and primary caretaker, that initially exposes the child to these important ideas. As Gudykunst notes, "Originally, children learn about their cultures from their parents. Parents begin to teach their children the

norms and communication rules that guide behavior in their cultures"[63] Not only are norms and values passed along by families to the child, but families also "give them their initial exposure to questions of faith."[64] Children are not born into a world that automatically disposes them to believe in one God, many gods, or no gods. Devotion to a "higher power," be it Allah, Buddha, Christ, or the forces of nature, must be learned—and the teaching process begins in the home. Barry and associates offer yet another catalogue of the values usually relegated to the family. These include training in obedience, responsibility, nurturance, achievement, self-reliance, and general independence.[65]

In short, we agree with Al-Kaysi when he writes, "The family provides the environment within which human values and morals develop and grow in the new generation; these values and morals cannot exist apart from the family unit."[66]

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

As you learned earlier in this chapter, people have multiple identities—individual, national, cultural, sexual, ethnic, and social class, as well as familial. We maintain that family is perhaps the most important of all your identities since it is a precursor to all other identities. Simply put, the family is the first institution that sends you messages about your identity. Burguiere makes this point in the following way: "Before we become ourselves, we are a son or daughter of X or of Y; we are born into a family, and are identified by a family name before becoming a separate social being."[67] In this sense "family is not only the basic unit of society but also affords the individual the most important social identity."[68] The family does this by giving children knowledge about their historical background, information regarding the permanent nature of their culture, and specific behaviors, customs, traditions, and language associated with their ethnic or cultural group.[69] Because of the importance of identity to intercultural communication, we will have much more to say on the topic when we get to Chapter 4.

COMMUNICATION TRAINING

Not only does family introduce you to the language of your culture; family also tells you how to use that language. By observation, imitation, and practice, you are first introduced to the topic of communication. As Gamble and Gamble note, "It is in the family that we first learn how to create, maintain, and end relationships; how to express ourselves; how to argue; how to display affection, how to choose acceptable topics for mixed company. . . ."[70] What is interesting about Gamble and Gamble's observation is that while cultures train their young people in nearly all of the behaviors they mention, cultures differ in how these behaviors are executed. Whiting and Child state this important point in the following manner: "Child training the world over is in certain respects identical . . . in that it is found always to be concerned with certain universal problems of behaviour. Second, child training also differs from one society to another."[71]

CONSIDER THIS

Do you believe child-rearing practices throughout the world are more alike than they are different?

Communication, Culture, and Family

The importance of the family to each culture was clearly stated by Confucius when he wrote, "The strength of the nation derives from the integrity of the home." Thousands of years later, the American historians Will and Ariel Durant expressed the same idea when they observed, "The family is the nucleus of civilization." Our passion for the importance of the family should be obvious to you by now. However, to this point we have treated the topic of family in somewhat general terms and have not brought out specific cultural differences in child-rearing practices. Before noting these differences, we need to make it clear that in many ways families, at least with regard to child-rearing practices, have many similarities. For example, "All cultures rely on the social unit of the family for the generation and perpetuation of the economic, political, artistic, educational vitality, and well-being [of the culture]."[72] There are, of course some other basic parallels shared by all cultures. As Smith and his associates point out, "There is much commonality across cultures in the construal of infancy and early childhood, based on biological needs for care, nutrition, protection, etc."[73] However, granting that there are similarities and commonalities, there are also specific cultural variations regarding the family that are worth noting. Anderson states this idea in the following manner: "The different cultures of our world have bequeathed to us a variety of forms of the family and specific roles that the family plays in society."[74] This subtle and yet powerful link between one's culture and how one develops communication patterns and social roles is clearly highlighted by the anthropologist Margaret Mead:

> At birth, babies can grow up to be members of any society. . . . It depends on how they are trained and taught, loved and punished, whether they turn into one kind of person or another. So, if we make a study of this and find out the steps by which these human babies become one kind of grown-up person instead of another, we learn a great deal about them . . . the details of a bath, or the way the baby is fed, the way it's punished or rewarded give us a great many clues about the way character is formed in that society.[75]

Mead's observation is one of the basic themes of this section. A human being's development can take any number of paths, and culture is one of the major determinants of that path. A child in India who lives with many people in one house learns about extended family. A Mexican child who is raised in a home with grandparents and great-grandparents learns about the treatment of the elderly. A child in Egypt who observes his father kissing the hand of his grandfather is learning about respect for the elderly. These seemingly insignificant experiences, combined with thousands of other messages from the family, shape and mold the way children communicate and interact with members of their own culture and with strangers. McGoldrick makes much the same point when she writes, "Families do not develop their rules, beliefs, and rituals in a vacuum. What you think, how you act, even your language, are all transmitted through the family from the wider cultural context. This context includes the culture in which you live, and those [cultures] from which your ancestors have come."[76]

McGoldrick is saying that families, like cultures, vary in everything from "their definition of family" to "their definition of the timing of life cycle phases and the tasks appropriate at each phase."[77] Understanding these variations is crucial to anyone who hopes to gain insight into another culture. The importance of this understanding is clearly stated by Smith:

> Thinking globally about family life means developing an awareness of the context in which families live—the environment and economic resources they have, or don't have, and how these affect their daily lives. It means being sensitive to varying cultural practices and traditions.

Thinking globally and cross-culturally means valuing the lives of families and their members, no matter how different they might seem, no matter the problems they face.[78]

To help you with that thinking process, we now turn to some family differences across cultures so that you can appreciate their specific impact on intercultural communication.

Cultural Variants in Family Interaction

Before we begin this section on the role of family in cultural interaction patterns, we need to cite four disclaimers. First, we remind you that all the major institutions of a culture are tied together. So while we might be treating the concept of family as a single social organization, you should be aware that it works in conjunction with other aspects of a culture. As Houseknecht and Pankhurst note, "Family and religion must be viewed in terms of their interactions with other institutions."[79] When a family sits down to dinner and says grace before eating, the children are learning about the importance of God and family at the same time. And when those same children help their mother display the American flag for a Fourth of July picnic, they are also learning about two deep structure institutions at once—community and family.

Second, although it should be obvious, we need to remind you that not only are there cultural variations in family interaction, but families within a culture also display differences. It would be naïve of us to assume that every family in the United States stresses the value of hard work, because we have all seen (or at least heard of) families where servants pamper even the youngest children. In short, variations among and within cultures exist. As Rodriguez and Olswang observe, "Societies differ, between and within cultures, in their conceptions of the desired traits in children, and therefore, parental beliefs and values might reasonably differ as parents seek to develop culturally defined traits in their children."[80]

Third, gender roles, like culture, represent a dynamic process, and therefore are subject to change. For example, historical events in the United States and "changing conditions have profoundly influenced our ideas about gender as well as our family."[81] From the start of the twentieth century to the early 1960s except during World War II when many women replaced men in factories to support the war effort, most females were raised to be wives and assume the general roles associated with staying at home. This, of course, is no longer the case. From being a member of the Supreme Court to being a part of a police SWAT team or a wartime army communication specialist, females are now socialized to assume a host of different roles. Historical changes have also influenced how males in the United States see their roles in the family. As Wade and Tavris point out, "It is no longer news that many men, whose own fathers would no more have diapered a baby than jumped into a vat of boiling oil, now want to be involved fathers."[82]

Finally, because of space considerations, we have not attempted to offer an in-depth exploration of the family. We simply want to make you more conscious of the cause-and-effect relationship between interacting with one's family and the manner in which one interacts with other people. The basic assumption of this section is simple: interaction patterns within the family offer clues to communication patterns found outside the family, or, as the Swedish proverb says, "Children act in the village as they have learned at home."

GENDER ROLES

One of the most important of all family patterns, and one that is found in every culture, is the teaching of accepted gender roles. As Wood notes, "Among the people who

Robert Fonseca

In all families, gender roles are transmitted from parents to children.

influence our gender identities, parents are especially prominent."[83] The learning of culturally acceptable gender roles begins as soon as the announcement is made proclaiming that a newborn is a boy or a girl. As Robbins observes, "The infant is given a gender-appropriate name, dressed in properly designed or colored clothing, and spoken to in gender-appropriate language."[84] In the United States, at least among the dominant cultures, "appropriateness" is rather specific. Summarizing the research on gender socializing, Galvin and Cooper offer the following synopsis: In our society males are socialized to be successful, aggressive, sexual, and self-reliant, whereas females are socialized to be nurturing, sensitive, interdependent, and concerned with appearance.[85]

So powerful is the socialization into gender roles that family interactions teach children how to differentiate between masculine activities and feminine activities when they are just infants. Studies reveal, "At 24 months children were aware that labels, such as boy, girl, mommy and daddy, applied to certain classes of people."[86] These perceptions, which are learned, influence how members of a culture interact with both genders. Researchers now know a great deal about those interactions and the specific role culture plays in the learning process. As Berry and his colleagues note, "The issue of sex differences in child-rearing has received rather extensive treatment in the recent cross-cultural literature."[87] The reason for the interest in gender behavior should be obvious. As Coles points out "These socially constructed gender expectations for girls and boys frequently translate into different experiences and roles throughout the life course."[88] Knowing these expectations offers clues as to how interaction is carried out. For example, with regard to gender roles in a health care setting, Purnell and Paulanka note, "An awareness of family dominance patterns is important for determining with whom to speak when health-care decisions have to be made."[89] These next few pages are intended to increase your awareness.

Asian. Earlier in this chapter we mentioned how the deep structure elements of a culture were mirrored in nearly all areas of perception and communication. You can see that relationship in gender interpretations found in cultures such as those of Japan, Vietnam, China, and Korea. In many instances, the history of these roles can be traced to the influence of Confucianism. Kim says of Korea, "Confucianism made men alone the structurally relevant members of the society and relegated women to social dependence."[90] In early Confucian families, whether they were Korean or Chinese, boys studied the classics and played, while "girls were confined to the inner quarters of the house where they received instruction in womanly behavior and tasks, such as domestic duties, embroidery, and cooking."[91] Even today, in Taiwan "a boy is expected to carry on the tradition of the family company" while a "girl finds herself physically oriented in the home."[92] According to Davis and Proctor, "Males are primarily responsible for task functions, while females attend to social and cultural tasks."[93] Jankowiak maintains that at the core of these gender attitudes, at least for the Chinese, is the belief that both biological and cultural forces contribute to these differences.[94]

Many of the gender attitudes we have just described for Korea and China are also found in Japan. Here children see the father served first at meals, getting the first bath, and receiving nods and deep bows from the rest of the family. All of these activities call attention to the importance of males in Japan. Little boys are indulged, pampered, and even allowed to be a little unregulated. All is intended to teach them what it is means to become a Japanese man. Young girls receive very different treatment as the family attempts to teach them the values associated with being modest and respectable Japanese women. Hall, referring to work by Takie Sugiyama Lebra, offers a clear depiction of that treatment:

> The training young girls receive at home instills cultural values and conditions them to proper comportment. These values include modesty, reticence, elegance in handling such things as chopsticks and dishes, tidiness, courtesy, compliance, discipline for self-reliance, diligence, endurance, and a willingness to work around the house. Japanese girls are groomed to be skilled wives and mothers.[95]

What is interesting about gender roles in most Asian cultures, Hendry says, is that although the family system perceives men as being superior to women, "the duty of care within the family falls almost automatically to women, whether it is in times of sickness, injury, or senility."[96] This is exemplified in the Chinese saying, "Strict father, kind mother."

Latino. With good cause Latin cultures are known to have a strong family orientation. Speaking of the Latino culture, Helderbrand and her associates write, "The sanctity of the family is particularly emphasized in traditional Hispanic culture. It is within the context of the family that the individual finds security and emotional strength."[97] This security and strength often come because of the sharp distinctions in how the family defines gender roles. As Beamer and Varner point out, "The Latin tradition is male oriented and based on a strong authoritarian leader."[98] The Mexican culture also places the father in the dominant role. Just as Confucian philosophy influenced the shaping of Asian gender roles, the conception of female roles within Christianity derives in part from the masculine representation of God as the Father.[99] You see this view toward gender roles being acted out when Mexican children learn, very early in life, that "within the family unit the father is the undisputed authority figure. The father makes all of the major decisions, and he sets the disciplinary standards. His word is final and the rest of the family looks to him for guidance and strength."[100] So strong is the influence of masculinity in the Mexican culture that "when the father is not present, the oldest son assumes considerable authority."[101]

The female role within Mexican and Spanish families is an important one and one clearly defined by tradition and religion. As Schneider and Silverman write, "Women, as mothers, belong to the City of God, set apart in the protected and protecting home. Motherhood is a sacred value in Mexico."[102] It is the mother who nurtures and educates the children while allowing the father to be "the provider and disciplinarian."[103] You can observe the same view of women in Spain. There, "the Spanish husband accords his wife due respect as stronghold of the family; he thinks of her as if she were a saint."[104] Female children observe this value and early in life begin "to play the role of mother and homemaker."[105] Children observe yet other female roles within the home. They see a mother who is willing to sacrifice, is strong, and has great perseverance. As Dana notes, these "behaviors ensure survival and power through the children."[106]

Indian. It was not by chance that we started this chapter with a detailed discussion of the deep structure of culture. You have seen how history, family, and religion are powerful forces in every culture and work together. In each of the cultural families we talked about, you saw the link between these social institutions and gender roles. As we move to India, the connection is once again clear. Henderson writes, "Women's status stems from the convergence of historical and cultural factors."[107] Some of these factors have their roots deep in Hinduism, where "women are associated with nature and with powerful sources of ritual pollution stemming from menstruation and birth."[108] According to Henderson, "This ideology separates women and men from one another. Masculinity and femininity become defined as distinct, if not opposing, entities."[109] This dogma also creates a culture where males are considered the superior sex. Male children are thought to be entrusted to parents by the gods. Gannon offers the following summary of this view of gender in India:

> The preference for a son when a child is born is as old as Indian society. A son guarantees the continuation of the generations, and he will perform the last rites after his parent's death. This ensures a peaceful departure of the soul to its next existence in the ongoing cycle of life. The word *putra*, or son, literally means "he who protects from going to hell."[110]

The Indian perception of gender is reflected in the fact that "men make most of the important decisions, inheritance is through the male line, and a woman lives in her husband's village after she marries."[111] These gender roles are identified and learned very early in life:

> Boys are given much more freedom of expression than are girls; boys are encouraged to take part in the religious festivals and activities as a means of introducing them to the spiritual world, and girls are asked to help with the chores that keep the family functioning. It is also hoped that [a girl] will grow up to be a good wife who devotes herself to her husband's welfare through her performance of religious ritual, household duties, and chastity.[112]

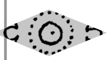
Arab. One of the clearest delineations of gender roles can be found in the Arab culture, which also treats males as the preferred sex. This partiality—as is the case with Confucianism, Christianity, and Hinduism—can be traced to religious issues among those Arabs that are Muslims. As Sedgwick reports, "Islam takes it as axiomatic that men are stronger than women, not only physically but also mentally and morally, and that women are, therefore, in need of male protection and guidance."[113] Women are expected to live in a way that upholds and furthers the honor of their families.

Speaking of the women in Iran, Daniel and Mahdi offer the following illustration: “The most important cultural norm affecting a woman’s life is the cultural association of a married woman with family honor. Women must be conscious of their public behavior and be constantly chaperoned a by male relative outside of home.”[114]

While the Koran has a great deal to say about women, as Anderson notes, “The Koran addresses men only”[115] and tells them “that wives should obey their husbands.”[116] There are countless specific messages in the Koran, ranging from admonitions against using cosmetics or perfume outside the house to rules about avoiding bathing in public places.[117] Preference for a male heir is so conspicuous that, on the wedding day, friends and relatives of the newlyweds wish them many sons. An Arab proverb states, “Your wealth brings you respect, your sons bring you delight.” Sait points out just how strong the preference for males is when he writes, “traditional Palestinian society views women largely through the prism of family, honor, and chastity, and those violating those traditional social norms face reprisals.”[118] Among Arabs, this polarized notion about the sexes even extends to the weaning of the child. As Patai says, “Weaning comes much earlier in the life of a girl than of a boy.”[119] Through these and other practices, roles begin to evolve, and women learn to be subservient to men while at the same time being very proud of their tasks, which are associated with supervising the raising of children and running the household.

In Pakistani culture, which also has deep Islamic roots, you can see gender differences in the perception and treatment of boys and girls. Irfan and Cowburn explain the Pakistani family and gender in the following manner:

> In Pakistani culture males are more highly valued. They act as the head of the household, the primary wage earner, decision-maker, and disciplinarian. Elder brothers, or on some occasions even younger brothers, take over the role of father and never get challenged by the parents.[120]



IMAGINE THIS

Felicita, from Mexico, and her roommate Maria, from Costa Rica, were both entering their freshman year at a major university. This was the first time either of them had been away from home. They were delighted when they were asked by some other students to go out on a Friday night. When the other students, a mix of males and females, arrived at Felicita and Maria’s dorm room, they asked if the two of them were ready to go. Both girls looked at each other and were somewhat confused. When the other students asked what was wrong, Felicita and Maria responded that they could not go. When the students inquired why they had changed their minds, Felicita and Maria said it was because there was not a chaperone to join them for the evening.

What happened?

CHANGING GENDER ROLES

Earlier in the chapter when we looked at globalization we pointed out that families, more than ever before, are being forced to change. Hence we move toward the conclusion of our section on gender and family with an observation by Sherif-Trask: “Westernization and globalization have differentially affected all families with respect to gender roles, child rearing, and maintenance of aging parents.”[121] While the change Sherif-Trask speaks of is often slow, you can observe shifts in gender roles throughout the world. In Africa, young women are starting

to question the notion of female circumcision, and in some parts of the Middle East women are asking for the right to vote. Recently a controversy surfaced in Saudi Arabia when newspapers "broke with tradition and . . . [began] printing photographs of Saudi women" and also carried stories about debates focusing on gender issues. One debate centered on "whether bans on women driving and working in some retail shops should be reversed."[122] The driving issue, according to a report on National Public Radio (July 10, 2008), is gaining some momentum: women are employing the capabilities of YouTube to air their arguments for an ease in the driving bans.

As we observed earlier in the chapter, the rise of a global economy has also contributed to a reevaluation of females' roles within the family. As Nanda and Warms note, "Women are being increasingly incorporated into the world economy, especially working in multinational corporations in developing countries."[123] As we have indicated, these new economic roles influence what happens in the family. For example, studies have shown that when Mexican American women secure employment outside the home, there arise within the family "joint decision making and greater equality of male and female roles."[124] In short, you must be careful when thinking about gender roles in a dynamic world and must guard against applying Western standards to the rest of the world.

INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM

Of great importance to the study of intercultural communication are the notions of individualism and collectivism. These two ideas will occupy a large portion of Chapter 5. We want to introduce the terms now, however, for they play a significant role in child-rearing practices and in the interaction that takes place within a family. Before we begin, it is important to realize that although the terms *individualism* and *collectivism* seem to be polar opposites, they are actually the end values of a continuum along which cultures can be placed. As Triandis points out, "Most cultures include a mixture of individualistic and collective elements."[125] What are these elements? In general, according to Schmidt and his associates, "The *individual-collective* dimension assesses a culture's tendency to encourage people to be unique and independent or conforming and interdependent."[126] More specifically, cultures classified as individualistic value the individual over the group. The individual is perceived as a sovereign and stand-alone entity. As West and Turner note, "Individualism involves self-motivation, autonomy, and independent thinking."[127]

Collective cultures have a view of the world that is somewhat different from that of cultures that value individualism. For example, Thomas and Inkson summarize collectivism in the following manner:

> In collective cultures, people primarily view themselves as members of groups and collectives rather than as autonomous individuals. They are concerned about their actions on their groups. Their activities are more likely to be taken in groups on a more public basis.[128]

If a family favors individualism over collectivism it is not a matter of chance, but rather is part of the enculturation process—a process that begins with the family. That is to say, within each family, children begin to learn (unconsciously at first) whether they are from a culture that values individualism or one that stresses collectivism. The manifestations of these lessons take a variety of forms. Let us look at some of those

forms as a way of understanding how your communication partners, and you, might view other people.

Individualism and the Family. As we have stressed throughout this chapter, most cultural characteristics have their roots in the deep structure of a culture. For Americans, individualism, as it applies to families, is linked to the history of the United States. From America's earliest colonial times and through the Industrial Revolution period, the nuclear family has been prominent in American culture. In these first nuclear families, early travelers to the United States would report that parents were proud of their "wildly undisciplined, self-assertive offspring."[129] We suggest that not much has changed during the last 250 years. As Moghaddam, Taylor, and Wright point out, "In modern North America, 'family' is often described in terms of the isolated nuclear family."[130] As we have already noted, this kind of family tends to "emphasize independence and individual autonomy."[131] In fact, Wood notes that in the United States, after attaining a certain age, children even work hard "to establish identities distinct from those of their parents."[132] Triandis underscores this North American attitude toward individualism within the family when he writes, "In individualistic cultures independence is expected and valued, and self-actualization is encouraged. Mother and child are distinct and the child is encouraged to leave the nest."[133] As you would suspect, this independence and autonomy encourage self-reliance. As Nomura and his colleagues write, "children in America appear to be encouraged to 'decide for themselves,' 'do their own things,' 'develop their own opinion,' or 'solve their own problems.'"[134] Althen buttresses this view when he states that "the parents' objective in raising a child is to create a responsible, self-reliant individual who, by the age of eighteen or so, is ready to move out of the parents' house and make his or her own way in life."[135] Still speaking about American families, he adds, "Notions about independence, individuality, equality, and informality are all embodied in what takes place in families."[136] As you will see in Chapter 5 when we discuss cultural patterns and values in detail, many of the "notions" mentioned by Althen have their origins within the structure of the family.

Collectivism and the Family. There is an Asian Indian proverb that states, "An individual could no more be separated from the family than a finger from the hand." The proverb serves as an excellent introduction to our discussion of collectivism and the family, since numerous studies show that "family interdependence is stronger in collective societies" than in those families that stress individualism[137] You can see that interdependence when Wolpert tells us that, in India, family members "share property, all material possessions, food, work, and love, perform religious rituals together, and often live under the same roof."[138]

The contrast between individualistic and collective families is vivid when we turn to Latino cultures. Here you can observe families that offer their members lifelong support, emotional security, and a sense of belonging. Ingoldsby summarizes the Latino experience within the family as a "type of social organization that places the family ahead of the individual's interests and development. It is part of a traditional view of the society that highlights loyalty and cooperation within the family."[139] As is the case with so much of culture, the collective view of family has deep historical roots. When we look to Mexico, for example, Rodriguez ties together the three ideas of history, collectivism, and family:

> From the time of our ancestors, the community has taken care of its children. The Aztecs accepted the children from the village into the clan and gave them *cara y corazon*. They

socialized them, teaching them the traditions, to be self-disciplined and obedient . . . It was the group that gave the child life and sustained him.[140]

Manifestations of collectivism versus individualism within the family can be seen by simply comparing how people in the United State and Mexico might express their ambitions. In the United States, a person might say, "I will achieve mainly because of my ability and initiative." Because of the emphasis on the extended family in Mexico, someone there might say, "I will achieve mainly because of my family, and for my family, rather than for myself."[141] This strong idea of living and functioning within an extended family is made clear by Standish and Bell when they note, "The dominant Mexican idea of family normally encompasses more distant relatives as well as unrelated individuals (often referred to as cousins or uncles and aunts) who have grown close, and who may live in the same household."[142] The same notion of extended families that we have been discussing is also found in Mexican-American families. Sanchez writes, "While it often consists of a household of husband, wife, and children, people of Mexican origin are more likely to live in an extended family context, which includes parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, cousins, and other blood relatives—commonly referred to as *la familia*, the greater family."[143] The idea of collectivism among Mexican families is further strengthened by a system of godparenting called *compadrazgo*. These godparents, in most instances, are not blood relations, but are part of the extended family. Zinn and Pok explain this further broadening of the Mexican family in the following manner: "The *compadrazgo* system of godparents established connections between families and in this way enlarged family ties."[144] Godparenting is also an important social institution in Brazilian culture.[145]

The Puerto Rican culture is another example of how the socialization process involves a collective orientation. According to Carrasquillo,

> For the Puerto Rican, the family is an extended social unit that encompasses a wide variety of relationships. The extended family functions as a primary agent of socialization, as a safety net for its members in times of need, and as a means for obtaining protection, companionship, and social and business contact.[146]

In France, the extended family is a major influence in the individual's life. Writing about French families, Asselin and Mastrone note, "The extended family serves as an active support network. Relatives, including godparents, are resources for finding jobs, an apartment, a car, and any number of products and services."[147] This same idea of an extended family is also found in sub-Saharan African culture. In fact, Wilson and Ngige write, "The nuclear family of husband, wife, and their children (i.e., family of procreation) was considered incomplete without the extended family."[148] The collective nature of this family structure encourages everyone "to contribute meaningfully toward the common good of the family institution, strengthening the cohesion and sense of belonging of all members in the community."[149] In these types of families, children are raised and nurtured by a series of adults. For example, according to Peltzer, child-rearing practices include "mothering by several adults during infancy and early childhood."[150] Richmond and Gestrin underscore this notion when they note, "The African extended family is extended indeed. Among its members are parents and children, grandparents, uncles and aunts, in-laws, cousins of varying degrees, as well as persons not related by blood."[151] You can observe the collective nature of these families in the Maasai proverb that says, "The child has no owner." The meaning, of course, is that all members of the tribe are responsible for socializing the children.

Three more cultures (Arab, Japanese, and Chinese) and one co-culture (American Indian) should be examined before we conclude our section on collectivism and the family. An excellent preview of the Arab view toward collectivism is stated by Esherick:

> Unlike the rugged individualism we see in North America (every person for him or herself, individual rights, families living on their own away from relatives, and so on), Arab society emphasizes the importance of the group. Arab culture teaches that the needs of the group are more important than the needs of one person.[152]

In these collective and extended Arab families people "share work, income, and expenses as a single economic unit."[153] They also share the raising of the children. And while the children are nurtured in a collective manner, they still learn about dominance. In the Arab world, children learn that God controls them and must be listened to. In the United States, children learn to answer mainly to themselves or their parents. While children learn such characteristics as self-reliance and responsibility in American families, in the Arab extended family, what is being taught is loyalty. In the Bedouin tribes of Saudi Arabia, "Intense feelings of loyalty and dependence are fostered and preserved" by the family.[154] As Nydell notes, for Arabs, "Family loyalty and obligations take precedence over loyalty to friends or the demands of the job."[155]

Japan is another culture where you can see the idea of collectivism being manifested in the family. Writing on the subject of Japanese families, Cheal points out that "individuals are encouraged to find fulfillment for their needs within the family and to put the collective interests of the group before their own personal interests."[156] This means that children are brought up "to seek fulfillment with others rather than individually."[157] This emphasis on collectivism within the family fashions children into adults who are part of a culture that holds loyalty in the high esteem.[158] Japanese parents also expect their children to be compliant "and avoid confrontations" that might disturb the harmony within the family.[159]

Within the Chinese family, collectivism also shows itself through intense family loyalty. For historical and geographical reasons, most Chinese have always felt detached from their central government. Hence, family loyalty comes first for them, as this Chinese proverb makes clear: "Heaven is high and the Emperor is far away." So strong is the value of loyalty that ethnographic studies suggest that children in China are raised in a manner that teaches them that they should not bring shame to their family, which would be perceived as a lack of devotion. Hence, in China, "Children are socialized to be conscious of what others think of them and are expected to act so as to get the most out of approval of others while trying to avoid disapproval."[160] Chu and Ju make much the same point: "An important Chinese cultural value is filial piety. Traditionally, Chinese children feel a lifelong obligation to their parents, ideally exemplified by an unreserved devotion to please them in every possible way."[161]

REMEMBER THIS

Some cultures engage in child-rearing practices that are characterized as dependence training while other cultures emphasize independence-training routines.

American Indians have a rather unique sense of collectivism, which

Cheshire succinctly illustrates: "Individuals identity themselves not only as members of specific families, but as members of a tribe, which creates a larger kinship structure to draw upon, with many families interrelated.[162] Because of this expanded definition of an extended family, Sue and Sue point out that "it is not unusual to have youngsters stay in a variety of different households."[163]

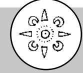
AGE GROUPING

The family is the first institution to introduce the child to the notion of age-grouping, an important perceptual attribute that greatly influences the way individuals perceive people of different ages. Classifying people by age is common in all cultures. As Haviland and his associates note, "Age grouping is so familiar and so important that it and sex have been called the only universal factors that determine a person's position in society."[164] As you would expect, there are vast cultural differences in how age is valued. In the United States, at least among most members of the dominant culture, we find a culture that prefers youth to old age. Staying young in the United States, where cosmetic surgery is a multi–billon-dollar industry for both men and women, often borders on an obsession. For those who cannot afford the expense of plastic surgery, there are special creams, hair dye products, and hosts of other cosmetic creations intended to fight off the ravages of aging. In short, encouraged by mass media that extols the values of youth and warns of the consequences of growing old, Americans have developed a pessimistic outlook toward aging. So extreme is the negative view of the elderly that, according to Nussbaum, Thompson, and Robinson, "Studies have shown, for instance, that young people in the United States are sometimes unwilling to interact with elderly individuals."[165] Ferraro points out that even the English language has created "derogatory terms" for the elderly.[166] Reflect on the images created by the following terms: "codger," "fuddy-duddy," "fossil," "blue-hair," "cotton-top," "old coot."[167] The age bias in the United States is so blatant that during retirement years the elderly are often "segregated from the rest of society"[168] and enter retirement communities and convalescent homes instead of moving in with their children.

The perceptions of the elderly that we have just described with regard to the dominant culture in the United States are not the rule in many other cultures. In fact, as Gardiner and Kosmitzki point out, "It is interesting to note how North American stereotypes of the elderly have influenced societal views of the aging process, especially when we consider how the elderly are perceived and treated in other countries."[169] Let us pause for a moment and look at some of these other countries and cultures.

We begin with a group of cultures that have a long tradition of positive perceptions of the elderly—Latino cultures. These perceptions are translated into actions that see the elderly being respected and cared for. For example, there is, according to Ingoldsby and Smith, "a strong cultural norm for Brazilian families to care for the elderly."[170] Sue and Sue see that same attitude toward the elderly in most Latin families, and they point out that "special authority is given to the elderly" in families.[171] Rodriguez underscores this view when she suggests that in Latino families the elderly are greatly revered and loved.[172]

As you know by now, you can find the roots of cultural norms regarding the elderly embedded in a culture's deep structure institutions. For example, Mir

REMEMBER THIS 

There are significant cultural differences in both the perception and the treatment of the elderly.

states, "Both the Qur'an and the Prophet emphasized the importance of caring for the elderly. In Islamic teaching, it is the responsibility of each individual to care for and honor his or her parents as they age."[173] You can observe the effects of this teaching when you look at Saudi Arabian culture. There, "the authority, wisdom, and counsel of elder family members are still to a great extent accepted, and younger family members must wait sometimes far into middle age before being accorded that status."[174]

The honor and respect we have been talking about in the Arab culture is taught early in life. Lutifiyya speaks of this early socialization process in the following paragraph:

> Children are often instructed to kiss the hands of older people when they are introduced to them, to be polite in the presence of elders, and to stand up and offer them their seats. Young people are encouraged to listen to and to learn from their elders. Only from the older people who have lived in the past can one learn anything of value, they are told.[175]

Arab respect for older people is also reflected in a very common proverb that declares, "A house without an elderly person is like an orchard without a well."

This same respect for the elderly is taught in most Asian cultures, where "children read stories of exemplary sons and daughters who care for their parents through good times and bad."[176] One of the main reasons for this great respect and reverent attitude toward the elderly in places such as China, Korea, and Japan is that ancestor worship and the past are highly valued. When this devotion to the past is transferred to humans, you get proverbs such as "When eating bamboo sprouts, remember who planted them." In Korean families, consideration for the "people who did the planting" is deeply entrenched in Confucian philosophy. Here children are taught at a young age that grandfathers and other older members of the family are the authority figures.[177]

Elderly people are not only venerated; they are also influential, both in and out of the Chinese family. As Wenzhong and Grove note, "Perhaps the chief determinant of relative power in China is seniority."[178] The hierarchy associated with age in the Chinese culture is clear. After the father, the eldest male has most of the authority. Probably as a result of the influence of Confucian principles, "there is still a strong sense of obligation to the older generation in Japan, whether co-residence is practiced or not"[179] Carlson and his colleagues point out that this creates a situation among the Japanese where there is great "obedience and deference to senior persons."[180]

The Filipino culture is also a culture in which the family teaches admiration and respect for the elderly. Says Gochenour, "There is an almost automatic deference of younger to older, both within the family and in day-to-day interaction in school, social life, and work."[181] The French culture teaches young people that "mature age is preferred to youth."[182] As Curtius notes, "The values which French civilization prefer are the values of age."[183]

Before concluding this section on age, families, and culture we need to mention three co-cultures within the United States. We begin with the Mexican-American culture, where you can observe that "respect for one's elders is a major organizing principle."[184] We have already pointed out some of the ties between children and their elders when we discussed the role of godparents (*compadrazgo*) in the Mexican family. Godparents are held in high esteem because they enter the child's life while the child is an infant—usually at the time of baptism ceremonies. Not only does the godparent enter the child's life early, but he or she serves a multitude of lifelong purposes that bring him or her respect. As Sanchez notes, "*Compadrazgo*, or godparents, who have a moral obligation to act as guardian, provide financial assistance in time of need, and substitute as parents in the event of death."[185]

Among American Indian families, the same positive attitude toward the elderly that we have seen in other cultures typified by extended families is taught early in life. As Still and Hodgins note, "The elderly Navajo are looked on with clear deference."[186] This reverence for the elderly is part of the culture's deep structure. "Historically, elderly American Indians have occupied a special role in the decision making of American Indian families."[187] "Elders are also responsible for passing on the collective and personal knowledge that each tribe has accumulated through thousands of years."[188] Hilderbrand and her associates point out the impact of being a "carrier" of the culture in the following paragraph:

> The elders are the safe-keepers of tribal stories and songs. Forming an Indispensable part of the community, the elders share and pass on to each new generation the tribal oral traditions. The traditions of passing information orally from one generation to the next is typical of all tribes.[189]

CONSIDER THIS

Remember as much as you can about your personal family history. On a sheet of paper, try to answer the following questions as they apply to the conscious and unconscious learning that took place. It might be interesting to compare your answers with classmates from a culture different from your own.

a. In general, could my family be classified as formal or informal?

b. What were the subjects of jokes?

c. What was the attitude toward the elderly?

d. Was conflict dealt with in a direct or indirect manner?

e. Who made the major decisions in your family? Mother? Father? Both? Other family members?

f. If you had siblings of the opposite sex, did you notice different child-rearing practices being acted out? What were those differences?

g. Was competition or cooperation stressed?

h. How did you learn about religious matters?

i. How were you rewarded?

j. How were you punished?

African Americans represent another co-culture in the United States that has a view toward the elderly that differs from the one held by the dominant culture. Campinha-Bacote offers an excellent summary of this position: "The elders in an African-American community are valued and treated with respect. The role of grandmother is one of the most central roles in the African-American family."[190] Much of this respect stems from the strong African tradition of honoring age and seniority.[191]

SOCIAL SKILLS

Earlier in this chapter we discussed how families are important to all cultures for a host of reasons. The reason that is most germane to this book is succinctly stated by Charon: "A family is a primary group living in one household that is expected to socialize children."[192] The key word in Charon's definition is *socialize*. Put in slightly different terms, he is talking about teaching the child how to employ the language of the culture and

use that language with people in and out of that culture. Gavin and Cooper elaborate on this notion when they write:

> Communication serves to constitute as well as reflect family life. It is through talk that persons construct their identities and negotiate their relationships with each other and the rest of the world.[193]

Families teach young children both the implicit rules (taboo topics, who to touch and where to touch, etc.) and the explicit rules (such as "Don't interrupt when people are talking," or "Look at people when you talk to them") of communication.[194] DeFleur and her colleagues further clarify the connection between family and communication in the following paragraph:

> The family is the most basic of all human groups. It is the context within which the first steps toward communication take place. The family is a great teacher of the symbols and rules of meaning that are the foundation of social life. Thus, the family has always been the principal source for learning vocabulary and linking symbols, meanings, and referents so the new members of society could take the first steps in communicating.[195]

As you must realize from personal experience, a family's communication responsibilities are numerous. Galvin and Brommel add to the list we have already presented by pointing out that the family introduces children to notions of power, assertiveness, control, negotiation styles, role relationships, and feedback rules, among other variables.[196] When children are very young, and primarily under the influence of their immediate families, they acquire an understanding of basic social skills. They learn about politeness, how to communicate and make friends, and even "what subjects can be discussed, and ways of expressing anger or affection."[197]

We now will look at some of the general social skills the family is responsible for teaching.

Aggression. Because all cultures prepare their members to live among other people, it should not be surprising that many of the same social skills are taught in every family. For example, instructions in good manners are stressed in every culture, for without some degree of civility you would have chaos and confusion. Yet the emphasis placed on this common child-rearing value differs in degree and intensity as you move from culture to culture. A good example of cultural differences in this common value can be seen in a culture's acceptance or rejection of aggressive behavior, which is influenced "through culturally mediated childhood experiences."[198] For instance, some studies of American family life have shown that parents encourage, approve, and reward aggressive behavior.[199] Among members of the dominant culture, children are often instructed to "stand up for their rights" and not to let anyone "push them around." Puerto Rico takes much the same approach, particularly among boys. In that culture, being aggressive and extroverted is often taught.[200] Many other cultures take the opposite view toward aggressive behavior. In the traditional Mexican family, which highly values respect, the child is instructed to avoid aggressive behavior and to use, says Murillo, "diplomacy and tactfulness when communicating with another individual."[201] One study found that "the Mexican parents were the most punitive for aggression against other children, while the American parents stand out as particularly tolerant of aggression against other children."[202] Native American families also try to avoid aggression and conflict within the family and seek to maintain harmony among all relationships.[203]

As we have indicated, non-aggressive behavior is typical within the Chinese family. In a Chinese family, children are taught the social skills necessary for group harmony, family togetherness, interdependence in relationships, respect for their place in the generational line, and saving face.[204] Similarly, in Arab culture, aggression within families is overcome by requiring conformity from early childhood on.[205] Another vivid example of how each family teaches various social skills can be seen among the Thai. Cooper and Cooper offer an excellent summary of the Thai family's role in teaching patterns of interaction:

> The child quickly learns that by behaving in a way that openly demonstrates consideration for the feelings of others, obedience, humility, politeness and respect, he can make people like him and be nice to him. This behavior may be summed up in one Thai word, *krengjai*. *Krengjai* is usually translated as consideration.[206]

Communication Skills. You can also observe cultural differences in the teaching of communication skills when you look at family patterns regarding how children are taught about the value placed on vocal interaction. Cheal offers the following commentary on the place of talk in American families: "One of the main things family members do is talk. They talk as they go about their daily routines in the household. They talk when they visit or phone distant members who want to be informed about what is going on within the family."[207] Kim supports the American view toward talk when she notes, "From an early age, Americans are encouraged to talk whenever they wish. American parents tend to respect children's opinions and encourage them to express themselves verbally."[208] As you would suspect, such a view of the importance of oral expression is not universal. For example, "From childhood, Asians quickly learn the importance of reticence, modesty, indirection, and humility: a person should be quiet unless he is absolutely confident about what he has to say."[209] One study even suggested that Chinese infants are less vocal compared to children brought up in Caucasian households.[210]

In the Sioux co-culture, says McGoldrick, "talking is actually proscribed in certain family relationships."[211] The rationale for this behavior, she continues, is that "the reduced emphasis on verbal expression seems to free up Native American families for other kinds of experience—of each other, of nature, and of the spiritual."[212]

We hope the examples we have provided have demonstrated the prominence of the family in the enculturation process. It is an institution that not only helps shape each generation to the values and beliefs of the culture, but also endures. In some ways the Chinese proverb that states, "To forget one's ancestors is to be a brook without a source, a tree without a root" can be used to describe a view held by all cultures.

Let us now move to yet another deep structure institution that endures, gives a culture its strength, and has "deep roots." That institution is the larger community called the *country* or *nation*.

History

History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illumines reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity. The importance of history to the study of culture is clearly illustrated by the preceding statement made by the Roman philosopher Cicero over two thousand years ago. His declaration takes on added meaning for students of intercultural communication when you realize that the

All cultures respect their historical traditions.

Gloria Thomas

word *culture* can be easily substituted for the word *history*. In a real sense, both are conduits that carry the essential messages considered important by a culture. Smith offers a more specific motivation for the study of history:

> For when we immerse ourselves in the flow of time, in the ebb and flow of cultures, in the immense drama of human life on our planet, we acquire a sense of vision of our earth as one small planet among many; so the study of history recognizes that our contemporary culture is but one expression of human life within a vast panorama of different communities and societies.[213]

Before beginning a discussion of how history and culture are interwoven, we remind you that our intention is simply to offer some selected historical examples that will enable you to understand the strong relationship between the study of intercultural communication and the study of history. The significance of this connection is underscored by Yu's recommendation that "we need to recognize that the history of every society or people deserves to be studied not only as part of world history but also on account of its intrinsic values."[214]

The influence of history is hard to pin down or define. As we discuss elsewhere, all the deep structure elements (family, religion, and history) are integrated. In addition, when we talk about "history" in this section of the book, we are talking about much

more than a chronology of events and dates. Granted, these are important, but when we refer to history as one of the deep structure elements of a culture, we are also talking about a culture's formal and informal government, its sense of community, its political and economic processes, its key historical heroes, and even its geography. All of these factors work in combination to provide the members of every culture with their identity, values, goals, and expectations. For example, the history of the United States teaches young people that almost anything is possible—one can even become president. United States history books are full of stories about Abraham Lincoln's log-cabin background and Harry Truman's beginnings as a clothing store clerk. Future texts will describe Bill Clinton's path from rural Arkansas to the White House and how Barack Obama overcame divisive issues of racism to run and win the election for president. Such history is an integral part of the American psyche.

The penetrating effect of a culture's history on perception and behavior can be seen in countless examples. You can also see the long arm of history influencing current events in the Middle East and Africa. The ongoing Middle East disputes become more understandable—if mistrust, animosity, and violence can be understood—when you realize that for centuries this area has been the site of conflict over territory considered sacred to Christians, Muslims, and Jews alike.[215] In Iraq, the contentious relations between Sunni and Shiite Muslims are not a product of Saddam Hussein's twentieth-century rule. The differences between these two sects can be traced all the way back to the seventh century.[216]

News media continue to reveal the devastation and human suffering in Darfur, an ongoing tragedy that has displaced nearly two million people and caused an estimated two hundred thousand to four hundred thousand deaths.[217] The immediate cause of this conflict between the predominantly Muslim-controlled government in the north and non-Muslim, non-Arabic populations in the south arose in the late 1950s, soon after Sudan became an independent nation.[218] However, the origins of the struggle extend back centuries. Likewise, the ongoing Indo-Pakistani territorial struggle over Kashmir, which caused the death of over sixty-eight thousand people in the eighteen years prior to this writing,[219] cannot be understood without an awareness of the 1947 partition of India and an appreciation for the enduring animosity between Muslims and Hindus on the Indian subcontinent. Within the United States, a continuing source of tension between the major minority groups and the dominant culture can be attributed to a long and agonizing history. The brutal subjugation of American Indians and African Americans is well known, and in the Southwest, Mexican Americans were similarly dispossessed of their property and inherent human rights. Laws were enacted to limit, and sometimes prevent, Asian immigration in the first half of the twentieth century. Early in World War II, Japanese-Americans were deprived of their property and forcibly moved to internment camps. It was not until the civil rights movement arose in the early 1960s that minority groups began to gain a rightful degree of equality and self-determination.

Our interest in the study of history is predicated on two assumptions. First, historical events help explain the character and actions of a culture. As the historian Kerblay noted, "For all people, history is the source of the collective consciousness."[220] From the earliest westward movement away from the East Coast settlements of the initial colonies to the contemporary explorations of outer space, Americans have agreed on a history of embracing new challenges. Second, what a culture seeks to remember and pass on to following generations tells us about the character of that culture. United States history books and folktales abound with examples of how a single determined individual can

CONSIDER THIS

What do you think is meant by the phrase "family, history, and religion work in tandem"?

make a major difference in the world. We have all learned how Rosa Parks began the civil rights protest, which Martin Luther King, Jr., shaped into the civil rights movement; how César Chávez organized the farm workers; how Bill Gates revolutionized modern technology; and how Elvis Presley introduced us to rock and roll.

History of the United States

Any discussion of American history must begin with an analysis of the people who created the United States. It is these *first immigrants* who set the tone for what was to follow from 1607 to the present. The influence of these first settlers is pointed out by McElroy when he notes, "Never before in history has a society made up chiefly of self-determining, self-selected immigrants and their descendants come into being in a place that offered so much opportunity for gain for those who would work for it."[221] McElroy also maintains that "primary American cultural beliefs derive from" these initial settlers and that they "began the process of distinguishing American behavior from European behavior, which during the next eight generations led to the formation of a new American culture."[222] McElroy is suggesting that much of what we now call "American culture" can be traced to a distinctive population that arrived at the outset of this country's history—a population that arrived believing in many of the values that continue to endure in the United States, such as hard work, self-improvement, practicality, freedom, responsibility, equality, and individuality.[223]

These first settlers, who were predominantly Anglo-Saxons, brought with them selected English values, the English system of law, and the basic organization of commerce that was prevalent during the sixteenth century. Just as these first settlers were beginning to stake out a culture, they were confronted with a wave of non–Anglo-Saxon immigrants. As we noted earlier, these new citizens continue to arrive even today. This ongoing influx of immigrants, both legal and illegal, has produced what is sometimes referred to as the first *multicultural nation* in the world.

Although cultural integration did not come easily during the early stages of the formation of the United States, the shared desire of the American people to be separated from what was known as "the Crown" and its divine right, as well as from the Church of England, provided the impetus to seek unity. This impetus led, in part, to the binding of the English settlers with Germans, Irish, and other ethnicities into a social fabric flexible enough to contain Catholics, Congregationalists, Methodists, Lutherans, and Presbyterians,[224] to name but a few, and to unite North, South, East, and West within a national framework. Americans wanted to separate alienable rights (those that could be voluntarily surrendered to the government) from unalienable rights (those that could not be surrendered or taken away, even by a government of the people).[225] The fundamental American

CONSIDER THIS

What do you think is meant by the phrase "the first multicultural nation in the world"?

proposition became "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" for each individual, and these liberties had to be secured against the potentially abusive power of government. The desire to escape the Crown and the Church of England also gave rise to what is commonly referred to as *the doctrine of separation of church and state*, which prohibits the government from supporting any single form of religion or from blocking anyone from practicing his or her religion.[226] This doctrine is currently at the forefront of U.S. political activity, as questions of abortion rights, school prayer, and government-sponsored displays of the Ten Commandments are debated at the highest levels of government.

As we have already noted, the people who settled the colonies quickly combined selected English values with a new set of beliefs. Chief among them were *individuality, a lack of formality,* and *efficient use of time*. Centuries later, these values still endure. Individualism was perhaps the first value that emerged in the new country. As McElroy notes, "The self-selecting emigrants who left Europe for America manifested individualism by their emigration. When they got on the ships, they were already individualists."[227] This sense of individualism was also a strong influence on the nation's early political formation. According to Cohen, the founders of the United States sought to establish a nation based on "political freedom, personal liberty, rule of law, social mobility, and egalitarianism."[228] The result was a government structured to facilitate economic, religious, and political freedom. A spacious land rich in natural resources encouraged implementation of these ideals, and personal liberty continues to be a hallmark of contemporary American society.

The value placed on individuality in the United States has been heightened through folklore and the popular media. For instance, there is a tale of how Daniel Boone's father knew it was time to move whenever a new neighbor was so close that he could see smoke from the neighbor's fireplace. Rugged individualism is also exemplified by the lasting popularity of the image of the American cowboy—someone unencumbered by restrictive obligations or personal ties, free to roam the spacious American West at will, and able to surmount all challenges single-handedly. Stewart and Bennett, however, have pointed out that the early frontier individualism, so commonly portrayed in the media, was more myth than reality.[229] Early settlers actually came together in loosely formed, informal groups to help each other accomplish a specific task; these groups disbanded upon the task's completion.

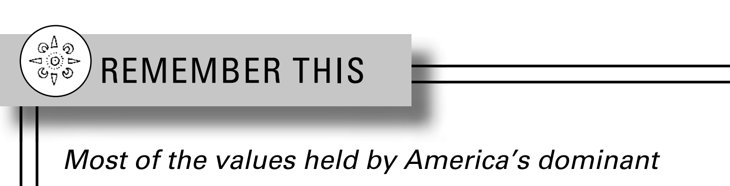
Distaste for formality and for the wasting of time was also part of the colonial experience. Settling a new, undeveloped land required that a great deal of time and attention be devoted to the daily activities of surviving, a situation that did not lend itself to formality or dependency. There was no time to waste on what was perceived to be the nonsense of rigid European and British rules of formality. Only resourceful and determined people survived. The difficult geographical factors of the Western frontier also had psychological effects on the settlers. After developing habits of survival based on individualism, a lack of formality, and efficiency, they soon developed thought patterns, beliefs, values, and attitudes attuned to that environment. In this way, individualism became even more pronounced in the American culture. Anything that might violate the right to think for yourself, judge for yourself, or make your own decisions was considered morally wrong.

United States history is also overflowing with instances of violence and wars, an experience that has helped shape our culture. The early history of the United States saw the capture, importation, and enslavement of Africans, the taking of American Indian lands by force, and numerous wars, such as the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Mexican-American War, and the Spanish-American War.

There are, of course, many other examples that reflect the American attitude toward military action. McElroy offers an excellent summary of this aspect of contemporary American history: "The most remarkable cultural feature of American behavior in the twentieth century is repeatedly deploying huge armies and other military forces on far-distant continents and seas and in transferring colossal quantities of war supplies to distant allies."[230] Any review of U.S. history should lead you to recall that America employed force in Europe in 1917, and in 1942 Americans fought in both Europe and the Pacific. American soldiers went to Korea in the 1950s, Vietnam in the 1960s, and Grenada in 1983, and until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the U.S. government dispatched troops all over the world to serve as bulwarks during the cold war. Panama, Desert Storm, and Kosovo followed the end of the cold war. This pattern continued into the twenty-first century, when the United States and its allies engaged in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq. The United States also continues to maintain a global military presence, with forces in 144 countries.[231] Guns are so much a part of U.S. culture and history that the Constitution guarantees the right to bear arms—a right no other nation grants. It is not our intention here to debate the merit of this heritage, but only to point out its influence on the development of U.S. culture.

Americans have historically believed in the principle of *Manifest Destiny*, a philosophy applied in the early 1800s to justify an aggressive campaign of westward expansion and territorial acquisition. Although originally used to dispossess Mexicans and American Indians, this philosophy stressed that Americans were the people "who would inevitably spread the benefits of democracy and freedom to the lesser peoples inhabiting the region."[232] One might easily construe the George W. Bush administration's call for greater democracy among Arab nations as another application of Manifest Destiny.

Notions of freedom and independence were continually reinforced during the United States' formative period as settlers restlessly moved westward into new territories. The challenge of developing a sparsely populated land also produced a culture with a strong love of change and progress. Today, change is commonly associated with progress, especially when economically driven.[233] The ability to conceive new ideas and innovative ways of accomplishing tasks is regarded as a highly desirable attribute. Consistency lies in the expectation of frequent changes designed to improve products, processes, and individual conditions. The expectation, and indeed desire, for change and innovation that pushed early settlers across the vast wilderness of the North American continent has produced a national restlessness that now sends men and women on explorations of space. This can be seen as a continuing manifestation of a cultural heritage that emphasizes egalitarianism, independence, frequent change, and a willingness to deal with the unknown.



Most of the values held by America's dominant culture are deeply rooted in the history of the United States.

History of Russia

Formerly the leading republic in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the Russian Federation has been an independent nation since the Soviet Union was disbanded in 1991. With an area almost twice the size of China or the United States,

Russia is the largest country in the world, stretching across eleven time zones. Russia's extensive border, the longest of any nation's, is contiguous to many Asian and European nations. This geo-location has played a major role in shaping the history and culture of the Russian peoples.

The Russians, like so many European peoples, have been subjected to war, persecution, and intense suffering. For thousands of years Russia has been invaded and occupied by people from other nations including Mongols, Germans, Turks, Poles, Swedes, French, Japanese, and English. Russian cities have been brutally occupied and tightly governed, with the population of entire towns and villages slaughtered. Consequently, Russians have developed a perception of the world that incorporates the plundering of "Mother Russia." While it is difficult for most Americans to understand this national paranoia about outsiders, Daniels summarizes these differences in perception and history:

> It is of greatest importance for Americans to appreciate how different was Russia's international environment from the circumstances of the young United States. Russia found itself in a world of hostile neighbors, the United States in secure continental isolation. Living under great threats and equally great temptations, Russia had developed a tradition of militarized absolutism that put the highest priority on committing its meager resources to meet those threats and exploit those temptations.[234]

As is the case with all countries and cultures, historical and political heritage has helped mold the Russians. Esler depicts those heritages in the following manner: "Russia's political tradition has historically been autocratic, from the legacy of the Byzantine emperors and Tartar khans, through the heavy-handed authoritarianism of Peter the Great, to the totalitarian regime of Joseph Stalin."[235]

The cultural experiences described by Esler instilled the Russian peoples with traits that made it easy for them to accept the dicta of their leaders and endure incredible hardship. One of the most vivid examples of the Russians being dominated by harsh and authoritarian rulers had its beginning in the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. This revolution was supposed to free Russians from the economic inequities and oppression of the czarist regimes and give the working class a political voice. Instead, much of the country was destroyed and the entire socio-cultural structure was changed in the name of Communism. Stalin's program of state agricultural and industrial collectivization disrupted the lives of "tens of millions. . . . Millions more died in the political purges, the vast penal and labor system, or in state-created famines."[236] The Second World War brought added suffering when some 27 million Soviet citizens perished in the struggle against Fascist Germany.[237] The repressive Communist regime lasted until 1991, when it collapsed because of economic stagnation and the people's demand for greater freedom.

Understanding the link between the Russian people and their land is also an essential component in appreciating this culture. As Kohan tells you, "Any understanding of the Russian character must inevitably begin with the land, which covers roughly one-sixth of the globe."[238] The vast harshness of Russia's steppes and forests and the sheer enormity of their country created a people who "would rather settle down by a warm stove, break out a bottle of vodka, and muse about life."[239]

The Russian historical legacy is also marked by a deep appreciation of, and devotion to, the *performing and cultural arts*. Since its inception in the early 1700s, the world-famous Bolshoi Ballet has been a source of great pride and esteem among all Russians.

CONSIDER THIS

How do you think wars, invasions, persecution, and suffering over thousands of years have helped shape the Russian character?

In the area of classical music, for over one hundred years the entire world has enjoyed and admired the work of Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Stravinsky. In the field of literature, Russia has produced such literary giants as Chekhov, Dostoevsky, Gogol, Pushkin, and Tolstoy, and five Russian authors have been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature: Ivan Bunin (1933), Boris Pasternak (1958), Mikhail Sholohov (1965), Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1970), and most recently, Joseph Brodsky (1987).

Today Russia is a *country in transition*. Over a decade has passed since Communist rule collapsed in Russia, and the transition into the "new world" has been a difficult one for the populace of this great nation. With very little historical tradition of democracy or capitalism to draw upon, Russia faces many problems. In the new century, President Vladimir Putin struggled with a social revolution, the privatization of many state enterprises, widespread corruption, and ethnic unrest. Moreover, there are continuing signs of movement away from recent liberal democratic reforms in favor of a return to a more authoritarian central government,[240] a structure that has long characterized Russia's history.

History of China

The Chinese proverb "Consider the past and you will know the present" clearly states how important history is to the study of Chinese culture. All Chinese derive a strong sense of identity from China's long historical record. Whatever people's qualities or quirks, whatever their circumstances or political allegiance, and whether they are part of the 1.3 billion that live in China itself or are scattered in distant lands as members of the Overseas Chinese community, *pride in China's history* weaves all members of the culture into a common fabric. According to Mathews and Mathews, one reason behind this intense pride is that "The past obsesses the Chinese in part because there is so much of it."[241] According to archeological findings, the prehistoric origins of Chinese society extend back some five thousand years. The Chinese began documenting their historical record 3,500 years ago, during the Shang Dynasty (1523–1027 B.C.), which makes China the world's oldest continuous civilization.[242] For students of intercultural communication, an appreciation of Chinese history is important not only because it is a source of such great pride to the Chinese people, but, as Matocha points out, "Many of the current values and beliefs of the Chinese remain grounded in the tradition of their history."[243] Let us now look at some of those beliefs.

A number of specific aspects of China's history contribute to the shaping of their worldview. First, and perhaps most important, is China's long history of *physical and cultural isolation*. For centuries, immense natural barriers isolated China. To its north lie the vast open spaces of the desolate Siberian and Mongolian plateaus and the Gobi Desert. To the west, high mountain ranges, sometimes called "the roof of the world," separate the country from Russia and the nations of Central Asia. The towering Himalayas form the southwestern border, dividing China from Pakistan and India. High mountains and deep valleys separate the country from its southern neighbors of Burma,

Noriko McDaniel

The Great Wall of China demonstrates that cultures seek to remember the significant events of the culture and pass the significance of those events on to future generations.

Laos, and Vietnam. To the southeast and east, China is bounded by the sea. This geographical remoteness contributed to China's sense of cultural superiority and helped form Imperial China's worldview, which Bond insightfully summarizes:

> Traditionally the Chinese aptly described their mother country as the "middle kingdom" or more broadly "the centre of the earth." Indeed, before the age of imperialism China had no contestants for that position within its geographical area and could rightly regard itself as the seat of learning, invention, culture, and political sovereignty in East Asia.[244]

China's historical *self-perception of superiority* was perpetuated by a belief that its language, political institutions, and artistic and intellectual creativity were unsurpassed. This idea of superiority abetted the Chinese preoccupation with remaining aloof from the rest of the world. Bordering states were expected to send periodic "tribute" missions to the capital, and all other nations were considered barbarians. The Chinese government believed that these barbarian nations had little to offer and contact would "threaten the integrity of China's own values."[245] It was only after forcible incursions by the Western powers in the nineteenth century that China began a "process of cultural self-examination focused on the issue of how to cope with the fruit and passion of outside cultures."[246] According to Esler, modern-day China continues to be influenced by its imperial past:

> This combination of isolation and predominance has fostered distinctive patterns of behavior and attitude among the Chinese. The unique combination, for instance, contributed substantially to the cultural continuity that marks Chinese history. In fact, twentieth-century China is still governed to a striking degree by ideas that first emerged two or three thousand years ago.[247]

Another historical value that has lasted throughout China's history is the notion of the Chinese *clan and family being more important than the state*. The significance of kinship to the Chinese offers another example of the bond that exists between a culture's history and its perception of the world. Since inception, Chinese society has been built on agriculture, as Hu and Grove note: "Generations of peasants were tied to the land on which they lived and worked. Except in times of war and famine, there was little mobility, either socially or geographically."[248] This labor-intensive agrarian lifestyle, extending over thousands of years, explains the Chinese cultural orientation toward collectivism, with the family or clan comprising the basic social unit. According to Chu and Ju, even the excesses of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s, which often pitted family members against each other, did not diminish the stability of the Chinese family, although its structure was altered.[249] The importance of the family is best seen in Bond's statement that the "Chinese culture is no place to be alone."[250]

The *values of merit and learning*, two traits that mark modern China, also have a long historical tradition. Zhou indicates that China "was already running schools some 3,000 years ago."[251] During the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), an imperial university was established and a system of civil service examinations was instituted. The examinations, which continued to be held until the early 1900s, attempted to negate the influence of family or political connections and based advancement on individual merit. This provided an avenue for even the most humble peasant to advance to the highest social levels. Quite naturally, as the following paragraph reveals, education became a highly valued part of early Chinese society.

> Because success in the examination system was the basis of social status and because education was the key to success in the system, education was highly regarded in traditional China. If a person passed the provincial examination, his entire family was raised in status to that of scholar gentry, thereby receiving prestige and privilege.[252]

Education continues to play a prominent role in Chinese society, and while more students can now attain a university degree, competition remains a central aspect of the school system. In 2008, for example, 10.5 million high school graduates competed for 5.99 million available undergraduate admission slots, a much higher percentage of available positions than in earlier years.[253]

China's current worldview is strongly shaped by historical events of the past two hundred years. By the 1800s, the Western colonial powers had established themselves in the East Asian region and begun to demand that China be opened to unrestricted trade. These demands, coupled with the ineffectiveness of the weak and corrupt Chinese imperial court, ultimately led to the Western nations establishing individual "spheres of influence" in China. In effect, these spheres resembled colonies, where the foreign residents enjoyed special privileges and extraterritoriality. It took World War II for China to rid itself finally of the foreign powers' forced presence and influence.

Following the Second World War and until the 1980s, China's history was characterized by internal strife and political turmoil. Left with a backward and underdeveloped nation, the postwar Communist leaders initiated a series of reform programs—the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution—which had disastrous effects on the nation and the populace. During this period, under the leadership of Mao Zedong, China broke ties with the Soviet Union and, as Huntington notes, "saw itself as the leader of the Third World against both the [Soviet and U.S.] superpowers."[254] In

reality, China became somewhat isolated from the developed world and suffered from a stagnant economy, which brought added hardships and suffering to the Chinese people.

In the early 1970s, China began to move away from the debilitating "revolutionary" programs and responded to political overtures from the United States, which led to President Richard Nixon's historic visit to Beijing in 1972. The death of Mao Zedong in 1976 gave rise to pragmatic leaders who recognized the need for economic and political reforms.[255] With these reforms, China began to open itself to the rest of the world as it moved toward modernization. In the early 1990s, Chinese leaders opted for a market-driven has proven enormously successful and improved the lives of millions of Chinese citizens. In less than twenty years, China has become a major player in the global economy. In 2007, for example, China's gross domestic product (GDP), which measures purchasing power parity, was estimated to be the third largest in the world, following only those of the European Union and the United States.[256] At the end of 2006, there were over five thousand domestic Chinese ventures in 172 countries and regions around the world.[257] China is now the United States' third-largest trading partner, following only Canada and Mexico.[258]

As a result of China's expanding economy and a demonstrated desire to play a larger role on the international stage, many nations have experienced a major increase in the amount of intercultural contact with the Chinese people. China's growing military power is a source of concern for its neighbors as well as for the United States.[259] China's reemergence as a modern great power is reflective of its historical influence in Asia. Its desire for increased military strength can be seen, in part, as arising from China's humiliating experience at the hands of the Western powers in the 1800s and 1900s. The Chinese take great pride in their long history, and they well remember the lessons of the past.

History of India

Many aspects of your daily life are a result of events that took place in India thousands of years ago. Every time you pull on your cotton jeans, eat chicken, or use the decimal system, you are enjoying the benefits of developments that took place in ancient India.[260] Modern India also continues to have an influence on your life. When you telephone for help solving a computer software problem or for assistance with an airline reservation, you may very well be speaking to a representative in Mumbai. And while you sleep, someone in Ahmedabad, Bangalore, or Calcutta could be transcribing the notes from your last visit to the doctor, processing your next paycheck, or even preparing your tax return. These few examples illustrate why an appreciation of India's history and culture is of significance to us today. However, there are additional reasons for learning about India. Some 2.2 million Indian Americans currently live in the United States and over 60 percent have college degrees. According to Kripalani, while these educated professionals love their adopted nation, they also maintain a strong attachment to India and their heritage. As more and more Indian Americans became part of the United States' diversity, it behooves us to have an awareness of the origins of their culture.[261]

Anyone beginning a study of the Republic of India is immediately struck by the rich diversity that characterizes the geography, peoples, and history of the world's largest democracy. Starting in the frozen vastness of the towering Himalayan Mountains to the

north, the subcontinent extends southward for almost two thousand miles southward into the Indian Ocean, passing through a variety of terrain and climate zones including deserts, tropical forests, alluvial plains, plateaus, and mountain ranges. The more than 1.1 billion people that inhabit this land constitute over two thousand ethnic groups, speak eighteen official languages, and practice a multiplicity of religions, which include Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Parsi, and a number of other belief traditions.[262]

India's contemporary multicultural society is a direct outgrowth of its long and varied historical legacy, a product of influences from South and Northeast Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. According to the archeological record, hunter-gatherers were active on the subcontinent as early as two million years ago. By approximately 2600 B.C., these early groups had evolved into urban dwellers, living along grid-patterned streets in houses with drainage systems. There is also archeological evidence that suggests they engaged in long-distance trade with societies in the Middle East.[263] These early inhabitants, who left no written record, are commonly referred to as the Indus River Valley Civilization because they lived along the Indus River in what is now Pakistan. Although the exact cause of its demise remains unclear, this civilization seems to have succumbed to a cataclysmic natural disaster and subsequent climate change.[264]

The subcontinent then witnessed the arrival of nomadic Aryans coming from the west, bringing with them cattle and horses. These pastoral tribes conquered and settled in northern India, forming various warring principalities. When Alexander the Great crossed into India in 327 B.C., he found a politically and territorially divided India, highly vulnerable to conquest. Following Alexander's departure, most of the subcontinent was consolidated into the Maurya Empire (321–185 B.C.), India's first unified state. The decline of Maurya culture left the land politically fragmented until the second unification of northern India, the Guptan Dynasty (A.D. 320–550). During these two eras, Buddhism and Hinduism arose and flourished in India. The various rulers practiced religious tolerance, which became one of India's principal values.[265] However, it was Hinduism, according to Henderson, that "provided a unifying framework through which diverse merchant, noble, and artisan groups were integrated into large-scale polities."[266]

Islam first arrived in the southern part of present-day Pakistan as early as A.D. 711, but its influence was generally contained in that region. It was the later Muslim invaders, arriving from the west via the Khyber Pass, who established an enduring presence on the subcontinent. These early Muslim raiders set about conquering the Hindus and destroying their temples, thus planting the seeds of "communal hatred in the hearts and minds of India's populace," [267] a historical legacy that continues to divide Muslim and Hindu. The presence and influence of Muslims grew to such proportions that the Delhi Sultanate, which was established in north-central India in the early thirteenth century, lasted for over three hundred years. Concurrently, the south was governed by an agriculturally based Hindu state.[268]

The Delhi Sultanate was deposed by another wave of Muslim invaders. Mongols coming from Central Asia established the Mughal Empire, which came to rule most of the subcontinent. According to Wolpert, the Mughals established "the strongest dynasty in all of Indian history" and nominally held power until the mid-1800s.[269] Indian culture flourished under Mughal rule. A civil service was established to administer the country, religious and ethnic differences were tolerated, meritocracy was practiced, and Persian became the language of the court. The arts were encouraged and thrived.[270]

The famous Taj Mahal, a monument to the wife of one of the Mughal rulers, was built during this era.

The decline of Mughal rule allowed Western powers to gain a foothold on the subcontinent, and ultimately allowed England to make India a colony. Western nations had long sought access to the spices of Southeast Asia, historically monopolized by Arab traders using the Silk Road to transport goods overland to Europe. With the development of sea power, the Western Europeans were able to circumvent the overland route by sailing around Africa to reach the Indian subcontinent.[271] Portuguese ships arrived on the west coast of India in 1510, and Dutch, French, and English vessels soon followed. Capitalizing on the political disorder that characterized the weakening Mughal rule, England's East India Company mounted a military takeover of power, with the objective of establishing itself as the dominant trading power on India's southeast coast.[272] Employing a private army of indigenous Indians, the company ultimately asserted control over most of the country.

The East Indian Company, which maintained a trade monopoly until 1813, was dedicated to commercial enterprise and had little regard for the native peoples' welfare, economic infrastructure, or culture. Grihault tells us, "At the time of the British arrival, India had a strong mercantile capitalist economy. Britain, however, restructured the economy to serve her own imperial interests, disrupting much of the indigenous infrastructure and impeding the development of India's own culture."[273] This transformation is illustrated by British merchants exporting Indian cotton to England, where it was made into cloth and re-imported to India, thus displacing millions of "Indian spinners, weavers and other handicraftsmen."[274] Ultimately, British commercial activities proved economically disastrous for the Indian populace, and at the end of the nineteenth century the nation was "less urbanized than it had been at the beginning [of the century], with over ninety percent of its much larger population dependent upon the land alone for support."[275]

The Indian National Congress was established in 1885 by young educated Indians, with an objective of redressing the excesses of British colonial rule. As a political organization, it was largely ineffective until Gandhi was able to "unite the property-owning and business classes" in the early years of the twentieth century.[276] Gandhi's historical campaign of passive resistance, which influenced the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1960s, led to India's independence from British rule in 1947. However, due to long-standing discord between Hindus and Muslims, India was 'partitioned' into two separate, sovereign states—India and Pakistan. The partition displaced some ten million people and unleashed widespread political violence between Hindus and Muslims, resulting in the loss of as many as one million lives. The enduring conflict between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir region is a legacy of the partition.[277]

Following partition, India instituted a government-controlled, socialist-oriented economy, which was characterized by marginal growth, budget deficits, a bloated bureaucracy, and high levels of unemployment. Finally, in the 1990s, effective economic reforms were undertaken that led to India's current rise in the global economy. This was achieved by relaxing foreign investment, privatizing government-controlled industries, and expanding into the international software and service industries. As a result, in the past decade India's poverty rate has been reduced by 10 percent.[278]

Despite its recent economic successes, India remains a nation of remarkable contrasts. The highly educated Indian workers supporting the information technology and service industries account for only a small portion of the nation's inhabitants. Over half of

CONSIDER THIS

What do you see in the history of India that has brought it to the brink of being an economic superpower in the twenty-first century?

the population continues to live in rural villages and almost 40 percent remain illiterate.[279] As you might expect, traditional values remain strong in the many Indian villages. The family continues to be the most important social institution, where respect for hierarchy and authority are part of daily life. According to Wolpert, Indian villages "reflect the fragmented diversity of many *jatis* [kinship groups] and faiths coexisting within an overall unity imposed by geography and ancient traditions."[280] It is this historical perspective that influences India's approach to managing contemporary domestic problems of an expanding population, rapid urbanization, and the long-standing schism between Muslim and Hindu as the nation increasingly becomes an integral member of today's global community.

History of Mexico

Almost twenty years have passed since Griswold del Castillo wrote, "Within the last few years Americans have become more aware of the importance of studying Mexico and its relationship to the United States."[281] During that time, events surrounding the ongoing immigration issue have only increased the significance of his words. More recently, Merrell added, "Knowledge of 'Latino' cultures is now more important than ever."[282] A part of that study should include Mexican history. As we have noted throughout this chapter, the deep structure of a culture (religion, family, history) offers valuable insights into the makeup of the members of that culture—how they view the world and interact with that world. This is particularly true for Mexicans. As Merrell notes, Mexicans "have respect for and pride in their past and their traditions, and they would not trade them for any other collection of traditions."[283] Schneider and Silverman reiterate the same theme when they write, "Mexicans themselves believe that their history holds the key to their character."[284] With this advice in mind, let us now examine some of that history so that you might better understand the Mexican culture. The history of Mexico, and how that history has influenced the Mexican people, can be divided into six major periods: (1) *the pre-Columbian period*, (2) *the invasion by Spain*, (3) *independence from Spain*, (4) *the Mexican-American War*, (5) *the revolution*, and (6) *modern Mexico*.

Although there is now evidence of human existence in Mexico and Central America dating back at least fifty thousand years, most historians begin the story of the Mexican people with what is called the *pre-Columbian period*.[285] During this period, which lasted from around 300 B.C. to A.D. 1519, the great agriculturally based cultures of the Olmec, Maya, Toltec, and Aztec tribes flourished in different parts of what is now Mexico. Though each tribe made its own unique contribution to contemporary Mexican culture, collectively they constitute an important part of the Mexicans' view of the world and of themselves. These groups produced civilizations that equaled or exceeded their counterparts in Europe.[286] Even today their legends, artistic heritages, architecture, and foods remain "an integral part of the [Mexican] national identity."[287]

It is important to remember that Mexicans are extremely proud of this period of their history, not only for its achievements in agriculture, creative arts, and the establishment of large urban settlements, but also for scientific advancements. For example, the Mayas were advanced in astronomy and mathematics. They developed the concept of zero before it was discovered in Europe, and they created one of the world's first calendars.[288] Mexicans are also aware of the accomplishments of the Aztecs, whose art and social and religious structure have survived for thousands of years. The Aztecs considered themselves the chosen people of the sun and war gods. Anyone who encounters Mexicans must keep in mind that feelings of great pride in their national history, their historical legacy, and their nation itself remain common traits among Mexicans even today.

The pre-Columbian period of Mexican history ended with the Spanish Conquest. On April 22, 1519, with cries of "God, glory, and gold," Cortes invaded Mexico. As Cockcroft notes, "The European colonization of the original peoples of Mexico and Latin America was a violent affair."[289] The attempt at colonization was, as Foster says, "a collision of two totally foreign civilizations, each previously unknown to the other."[290] Cortes, because of his use of horses, guns, and interpreters, had little trouble brutalizing and defeating the indigenous people of Mexico. It is estimated that killings, starvation, disease, and overwork affected about 90 percent of the native population by 1650.[291] The Spanish occupation of Mexico, and subsequent subjugation of the Mexican Indians, changed the country and the people forever.

Let us look at three of the major changes brought about by the Spanish military victory. The first was the introduction of Catholicism in Mexico. In the beginning, it was left to the Spanish army to demolish Indian idols and replace them with crosses. It was the Spanish friars, however, not the soldiers, who "fanned out across the country" converting the conquered natives.[292] The conversions were rather easy, because the Indians adapted the new religion to meet their needs. In addition, both cultures "believed in an afterlife and a world created by god(s)."[293]

The second outgrowth of the Spanish domination was the development of a rigid social class system that many historians believe had negative consequences on the Indian people. As Foster observed, "The Spanish caste system spread illiteracy, racism, and official corruption through the land, setting one group against the others."[294] Third, Spain's occupation of Mexico resulted in large tracts of land (*encomiendas*) being turned over to the Spanish conquerors. This created a large gap between the upper and lower classes in much of Mexico and engendered a highly stratified social order—characteristics that remain a part of Mexican society.[295]

For almost three hundred years, Mexico suffered under Spanish rule as a feudal and deeply Catholic country where landed aristocrats dominated a population of peasants.[296] In the summer of 1810, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a Creole parish priest, rallied a group of his followers and started working and fighting for the *independence of Mexico*. Although Hidalgo was executed in 1811, he is known as the "father of Mexican independence," an independence that came on February 24, 1821, in the form of the Plan of Iguala,[297] sometimes referred to as the Plan of Three Guarantees. However, final freedom did not arrive until 1824, when Mexico became a federal republic under its own constitution. During this period Mexico abolished noble titles and attempted to introduce measures that would produce a more democratic society. However, as Johns points out, "Neither independence from Spain nor the Mexican revolution changed the basic structure of social relations in which a small, largely Hispanic elite presided over the exploitation of the impoverished populace."[298]

The next twenty years witnessed great upheaval in Mexico as the people attempted to adapt to a new form of government. It was during this period that the territory of Texas declared its independence from Mexico. Coupled with the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, this event proved to be a major cause of the Mexican-American War, which began when President Polk declared war on Mexico on May 13, 1846. In addition to Texas, Polk, with the backing of the American people, wanted to acquire what amounted to half of Mexico's territory. The two countries fought over the land for two years in a war "that Americans hardly remember and that Mexicans can hardly forget."[299] The war ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

On February 2, 1848, the treaty was signed in Guadalupe Hidalgo, a city north of the capital where the Mexican government had fled as U.S. troops advanced. Its provisions called for Mexico to cede 55 percent of its territory (present-day Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas, and parts of Colorado, Nevada, and Utah) in exchange for 15 million dollars of compensation for war-related damage to Mexican property.[300] For Mexicans the war was a bitter defeat. But for the United States, it was an example of Manifest Destiny—"spreading the benefits of democracy to the lesser peoples of the continent."[301]

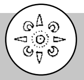
The war between these neighbors had an impact that is felt even today. According to historians Samora and Simon, "The Mexican-American War created unparalleled bitterness and hostility toward the United States, not only in Mexico but throughout Latin America."[302] They add, "Even today, Latin American relationships with the United States are often marred by suspicion and distrust"[303] that go back over a hundred years.

The next important phase of Mexico's history deals with the *Revolution of 1910*. After a long and tiring dictatorship under President Porfirio Diaz, the Mexican people revolted. At the time of the revolution "90 percent of Mexico's mestizos and Indians were still desperately poor on the ranches and haciendas of a handful of wealthy landowners."[304] While the revolution "was an effort to bring about social change and equality for all Mexicans," it was also an attempt to return to local customs and traditions and to break away from European "culture and standards."[305] Under new leadership, a constitution marked by a high degree of social content was approved in 1917. The revolution "ended feudalism and peonage, and created labor unions, and redistributed land."[306]

The last phase of Mexican history that is important to students of intercultural communication is *modern Mexico*. Huge oil and natural gas reserves, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, and the hundreds of *maquiladora* factories along the U.S.–Mexico border have made Mexico a major economic force in the world. Additionally, with the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Mexico, the United States, and Canada became free-trade partners.

Although the passage of time and the implementation of economic agreements have improved relations between the governments of Mexico and the United States, there are still important issues that call for effective intercultural interaction. Almost a million people legally transit back and forth across the U.S.–Mexico border daily.[307] These individuals are engaged in a variety of professional and personal endeavors: working in border security, seeking health care, attending schools, vacationing, and performing numerous other activities. Over 18,000 companies with investment from the United States operate in Mexico, and between five hundred thousand and one million Americans make Mexico their primary residence.[308] No issue, however, is as galvanizing as that of illegal immigrants entering the United States. Many in Mexico see emigration

as simply a response to market demands; people will only go to where they can obtain employment. But in the United States, the illegal crossings are often viewed as eroding the rule of law, threatening domestic security, and diluting the U.S. labor market. Mexicans harbor more than a little resentment toward the United States for the existing and planned physical barriers along the common border. The issue of providing health, educational, and other social benefits to illegal immigrants remains another topic of heated debate in the United States. Mexico's refusal to extradite criminals who may be subject to the death penalty in the United States is also a source of contention. Despite the existing economic interdependency, the Mexico–U.S. relationship remains a troubled one, marked by events in the past, contemporary problems, and considerable cultural differences.

REMEMBER THIS 

Mexico has a long history of being attacked and occupied by outside forces. These assaults have shaped Mexico's perception of the rest of the world.

History of Islamic Civilization

Our previous sections on history have dealt with individual nations and how past events have influenced the cultural characteristics of those nations. For our last section, however, we will take a much broader perspective and examine the sweeping history of Islamic civilization and how it continues to be a major factor in the lives of well over a billion people. The tragedy of September 11, 2001, and subsequent events in the Middle East are motivation enough for you to acquire an understanding of Islamic history and culture. But there are many additional reasons for learning about Islam. For example, Muslims now constitute approximately one-fifth of the world's population.[309] Today, Islam is the predominant religion of most nations in North Africa and the Middle East, and of several nations in South and Southeast Asia. As we discuss in Chapter 3, Islam is the world's second largest religion, exceeded only by Christianity, and will soon be the "second largest religion in America."[310] Muslims are part of the U.S. fabric. They are your coworkers, your neighbors, your sports stars, and, significantly, they form an integral part of our society.

The story of Islamic civilization began in the seventh century and encompasses more than fourteen centuries, far more than space and time allow us to examine here. We will focus, therefore, on the rise of Islam in the Middle East, its spread westward, and its ensuing interactions with European states. We urge you, however, to keep in mind that this is but one part of the story of Islam. In the east, Islam spread across India and central Asia to western China and as far as Indonesia and the southern Philippines, where it continues to command a significant presence today. The world's fourth most populous nation, Indonesia, is home to almost two hundred million Muslims.[311]

Because in Chapter 3 we will discuss the establishment of Islam as a religion by Muhammad early in the seventh century, we will start this chapter's examination of Islamic history with his death. When Muhammad died in A.D. 632, no one had been designated to take his place, nor was there a clear line of succession, because he had no male heir.[312] This void was filled by a series of *caliphs*, from the Arabic word for

"successor" or "representative,"[313] a role assumed by successive leaders of Islam until the demise of the Ottoman Empire in 1922 at the end of the First World War. The first caliphs were drawn from those who had directly served Muhammad and were known as the "Rightly Guided Caliphs" (A.D. 632–661).[314] Soon after his death, many of the Arab groups that had previously submitted to Muhammad's teachings and leadership sought to remove themselves from the control of the new caliphs. Armed groups of "believers" were quickly dispatched to suppress the dissenters, and within two years, the Arabian Peninsula had been completely subdued. By the middle of the seventh century, the "believers" held control of most of what is now the modern Middle East.[315] As Donner points out, these conquests "established a large new empire in the Near East," with a leadership "committed to a new religious ideology."[316] The new empire, or state, provided the political order and organizational structure necessary for the proliferation of the Islamic religion.

This period, however, was not without internal problems. Questions of leadership succession continued to plague the caliphate and ultimately led to civil wars and the division of Islam into its two major factions—Sunni and Shiite. Today, Sunni represent over 85 percent of all Muslims and Shiites compose 13–14 percent,[317] with the latter concentrated in Iran and Iraq. The fundamental difference separating these two divisions has its roots in the historical question of leadership of the Muslim community. And while we will examine the distinctions between Sunni and Shiites in Chapter 3, the historical significance of these differences justifies a brief preview of that story.

Sunni believe that leader of Islam should be whoever is best qualified to lead. The Shiites, however, contend that leadership should be a function of heredity, through lineage traced back to Muhammad. The two groups see themselves divided not by ideology but by a question of politics.[318] However, because the Shiites have always been a minority, they have developed an interpretation of history quite different from the Sunni. Esposito provides an insightful summation of the two groups' worldviews:

> While Sunni history looked to the glorious and victorious history of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs and then the development of imperial Islam . . ., [Shiite] history was the theater for the struggle of the oppressed and disinherited. Thus, while Sunnis can claim a golden age when they were a great world power and civilization, which they believe is evidence of God's favor upon them and a historic validation of Muslim beliefs, [Shiites] see in these same developments the illegitimate usurpation of power by Sunni rulers at the expense of a just society. [Shiites] view history more as a paradigm of the suffering, disinheritance, and oppression of a righteous minority community who must constantly struggle to restore God's rule on earth under His divinely appointed Imam.[319]

These two contrasting perspectives should provide you with a greater understanding of the historical enmity influencing relations between Sunni and Shiites in Iraq as they endeavor to set religious interpretations aside and unite under a banner of nationalism.

With the death of the last of the caliphates who had known Muhammad, the era of the "Rightly Guided Caliphs" ended and the Umayyad Caliphate (A.D. 661–750) began. This era brought many changes to Islam, one of which was the relocation of the capital from Medina in Arabia to Damascus, in Syria. Of greater importance, consolidation of the Middle East enabled Muslims to embark on the conquest of more

distant lands. Soon the forces of Islam were moving into Central Asia and across what is now Iran and Afghanistan into the Indus River Valley (part of modern-day Pakistan). To the west, Muslim armies marched across North Africa and crossed into southern Spain in 710. They remained a significant presence there until 1492, when Christian armies forced the Muslims to abandon Granada, their last bastion on the Iberian Peninsula.[320]

In the mid-eighth century, the Umayyad Caliphate was succeeded by the Abbasid Caliphate (749–1258) and the seat of government was moved to Baghdad. Under the Abbasids, an empire that had previously been controlled by an Arab hierarchy was changed into a multiethnic theocracy, dominated by Muslims of non-Arab origin. With Islam as the uniting force, all believers, regardless of ethnicity or place of origin, were considered equal.[321] Under the Abbasids, Baghdad became one of the world's most important cities, and its wealth enabled Muslim emissaries to continue to expand Islamic influence.[322] But this preeminence could not be sustained. As a result of political decline, agricultural failure, and the rise of numerous independent Islamic dynasties in other regions, by the tenth century Baghdad's control of the Islamic empire had become decentralized. These new powers further increased the spread of Islamic culture as the new dynasties sought to emulate Baghdad, becoming centers for learning, art, and craftsmanship.[323]

Although Muslims had occupied Jerusalem, the seat of both Christianity and Judaism, in 638, they ruled the city without religious persecution and the city remained open to Christian and Jewish pilgrims.[324] This tolerance was ended in the early eleventh century with the arrival of the Seljuk Turks, who sacked Baghdad and took control of Jerusalem. Pilgrims returning to Europe brought reports of the desecration of holy Christian sites and persecution of Christians. Seljuk forces also drove the Byzantines from their lands in Asia Minor (now part of Turkey). The Byzantine rulers appealed to Rome for assistance, hoping for trained armies. In response, Pope Urban II in 1095 called for the masses to help in "saving fellow Christians" and liberating the Holy Land.[325] Thus the Crusades were launched. Christian forces, consisting of nobles, mercenaries, and adventurers, were able to gain control of isolated pockets in the Holy Land before finally being defeated by the Arab ruler Saladin in the late twelfth century. Smith notes, "Saladin's treatment of the Christian population [in Jerusalem] was humane and reasonable, in notable contrast to the way in which Christians had earlier dealt with Muslims and Jews upon their arrival in Jerusalem."[326]

The final era of the caliphates, and indeed of a united Islam, began with the Mongol invasion of Islam. Mongol warriors reached Baghdad during the mid-thirteenth century and set about destroying the city and all its inhabitants. The devastation brought by the Mongol armies pushed the Turkish nomads into the eastern regions of modern Turkey, where they met and defeated the last of the Byzantine forces. These nomads became known as the Ottomans, and they ruled Islam for more than six hundred years. During their reign, Ottoman armies advanced into Europe as far as Vienna, Austria, and took control of the Balkans, where large communities of Muslims remain today. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the European powers began to challenge Ottoman rule, which was plagued by internal decay and could no longer contain the Christian nations. As the Ottoman Empire retreated, the European powers rushed in to fill the void. The extent of this change is pointed out by Bernard Lewis:

> By the early twentieth century—although a precarious independence was retained by Turkey and Iran and by some remoter countries like Afghanistan, which at that time did not seem

> worth the trouble of invading—almost the entire Muslim world had been incorporated into the four European empires of Britain, France, Russia, and the Netherlands.[327]

The defeat of the Ottomans at the end of the First World War concluded more than thirteen centuries of a unified Islam and replaced it with nation-states, many of which remained under the domination of Western colonial masters until after the Second World War.[328] Since that time, relations between the West and the Muslim world have traveled a bumpy road, and the focal point has been the oil-exporting nations of the Middle East and Indonesia.[329]

This brief chronology illustrates the richness of Islamic history, which helps shape the identity and worldview of modern Muslims. History is particularly significant to Muslims, as noted by Lewis:

> Islamic history, for Muslims, has an important religious and also legal significance, since it reflects the working out of God's purpose for His Community—those that accept the teachings of Islam and obey its law. [330]

Lewis continues:

> Middle Easterners' perception of history is nourished from the pulpit, by the schools, and by the media, and, although it may be—indeed, often is—slanted and inaccurate, it is nevertheless vivid and powerfully resonant.[331]

From the Muslim perspective, the early era of the caliphates represents a period of one ruler exercising dominion over a single state. The perception of unity persisted even after the caliphate had splintered into a variety of dynastic states, and the people of this Islamic domain identified themselves not by nationality or ethnicity but as Muslims.[332] But since the fall of the last Ottoman caliphate, in the early 1900s, the history of the Muslim world has been dominated by interaction with the West and characterized by near-continual change and transformation.[333] Often this change was unilaterally imposed by an occupying power or an autocratic ruler.

These events should help you to understand why Muslims today look on Islamic history with both pride and humiliation. Pride is taken in the fact that while Europe was mired in the Middle Ages, Islam represented "the most advanced civilization in the world"[334] and extended from the Pyrenees, a range of mountains along the French and Spanish border, to the islands of Indonesia and the southern Philippines. However, since the middle of the nineteenth century, in the Muslim perception of history, Western nations have continually encroached on traditionally Islamic lands. Muslims also harbor perceptions of persistent unfair treatment from the Western powers, especially concerning the Palestinian problem. With few exceptions, many Muslim nations today are plagued by poverty and autocratic rule.[335] Many Muslims see this failure as a product of modernization,[336] and, rightly or wrongly, modernization is often associated with the West and Western values.[337] This has given rise to some groups calling for a return to the golden age of Islamic civilization, the reinstitution of strict Islamic law, values, and principles, and the exclusion of Western ways. So strong is the influence of history that these groups romanticize the past as the way to a better future.[338]

For contemporary Muslims, the history of Islam is continually reinforced through (1) language, (2) geography, and (3) tribal affiliation, all of which are derived from the religion's Arabic origins.[339] Classical Arabic was the original language of the Koran, and Arabic became the language of the Middle East and North Africa as a result of the

early Islamic conquests. Located in southeast Saudi Arabia, Mecca remains the holiest of all Arab sites and the annual destination of more than a million pilgrims who make the *hajj* each year. Tribal affiliation, the basis of ancient Arabia's societal organization, continues to exert a strong influence among contemporary Muslims. The importance and role of tribal organization has been vividly demonstrated in Iraq, where U.S. forces belatedly recognized the benefits of working through tribal leaders.

To conclude our discussion, we need to point out that the history of Islamic civilization can easily be oversimplified into a tale of conquest and colonization. One can also use that same lens to view the history of Western civilization. As Lewis tells us:

> From the end of the fifteenth century, the peoples of Europe embarked on a vast movement of expansion—commercial, political, cultural, and demographic—which by the twentieth century had brought almost the whole world into the orbit of European civilization.[340]

Space limitations preclude us from discussing the lasting achievements in the sciences, arts, literature, philosophy, and architecture that are a product of Islam. These accomplishments came from the early Islamic centers of civilization, where art, scholarship, craftsmanship, and intercultural borrowing were encouraged. Because of the Islamic world's unification, advancement in any particular field was quickly spread throughout Islam.

Whatever your own history and culture, it likely bears an Islamic influence. Muslims have been coming to the United States since before the nineteenth century. They were among the early explorers, traders, and settlers. It is also estimated that Muslims constituted 14 to 20 percent of the slaves brought from Africa.[341] Words we use every day, such as *algebra*, *average*, *lemon*, and *magazine*, have Arabic origins. And the next time you are sipping your favorite coffee drink, recall that coffee, along with coffeehouses, was introduced to the West through Islam.

As we conclude this chapter, we again remind you that there are thousands of examples of the relationships among history, worldview, family, and culture. We have offered but a handful. In each instance, our aim was to demonstrate that the study of intercultural communication must include an examination of what Wolfe calls "the sacred trinity—God, family, and country."[342]

SUMMARY

- The deep structures of a culture, which include such elements as family, history (country), and religion (worldview), are important because they carry a culture's most important beliefs. Their messages endure, are deeply felt, and help supply much of a culture's identity.
- Families can take a variety of different forms.
- Traditional definitions of "family" are undergoing changes in the United States.
- Globalization has had a major impact on traditional family structures throughout the world.
- Families perform a series of key functions in all cultures. These functions include teaching members of the culture about reproduction, economics, socialization, values and religion, identity, and communication.

- The family also teaches gender roles, views on individualism and collectivism, perceptions of aging, and social skills.
- History and culture are interwoven.
- The study of intercultural communication and the study of history go hand in hand.
- History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illumines reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life, and brings us knowledge of antiquity.
- The influence of history is difficult to explain, because it contains all of the deep structure elements of culture.
- A culture's history affects individual perception and behavior and how people relate to other cultures.
- Historical events help explain the character of a culture.
- History is a key element in developing a culture's identity, values, goals, and expectations.

ACTIVITIES

1. Ask someone from a different culture some specific questions about child-rearing practices. You might inquire about methods of discipline, toys, games, stories, topics discussed at the dinner table, and so forth.
2. Working in small groups, have each person discuss the "stories" that helped form his or her family and cultural identity.
3. Assemble a small group of people from a variety of cultures and try to answer the following questions:
   a. What sort of family interactions influence gender roles?
   b. How do family interaction patterns influence relations between young people and the elderly?
4. Pair off in class or out of class with someone from a culture different from your own. Find out as much as you can about the history of your partner's culture. Try to isolate examples of how your partner's cultural values have been determined by historical events.

DISCUSSION IDEAS

1. What are some ways in which a person's family influences his or her cultural identity?
2. Examine the deep structure of your culture(s) and explain how it influences intercultural communication.
3. Compare how the following approaches to parenting would deal with aggressive behavior among children: authoritarian, laissez-faire, collectivist, and individualist.
4. How can the different historical legacies of the United States and the Islamic world promote conflict?
5. Can you think of some ways that globalization will change our traditional notion of what is considered a family?

CHAPTER 3

Worldview: Cultural Explanations of Life and Death

Religion is doing; a man does not merely think his religion or feel it, he "lives" his religion as much as he is able, otherwise it is not a religion but fantasy or philosophy.

GEORGE GURDJIEFF

There is only one religion, though there are a hundred versions of it.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

In the introduction to the last chapter we pointed out that family, community (country), and worldview (religion) were three of the earliest markers in the evolution of what we now call culture. We noted that these three social organizations work in combination to transmit the most important beliefs of a culture. Having earlier explained family and community in detail, we now turn our attention to the topic of worldview.

Worldview

There are perhaps as many definitions of *worldview* as there are definitions for the words "communication" and "culture." Many of the definitions are general, such as the one offered by Peoples and Bailey: "The worldview of a people is the way they interpret reality and events, including images of themselves and how they relate to the world around them."[1] Other definitions, such as the one advanced by Ishii, Cooke, and Klopf, are more specific: "Worldview is a culture's orientation toward God, humanity, nature, questions of existence, the universe and cosmos, life, moral and ethical reasoning, suffering, death, and other philosophical issues that influence how its members perceive their world."[2] Perhaps the most succinct and useful definition for our purposes is the one suggested by Walsh and Middleton: "A worldview provides a model of the world which guides its adherents in the world."[3] The appeal of this definition is found in the use

of the word *guide*, which indicates that worldview functions as a guide to help people determine what the world looks like and how they should function within that world. In this sense, worldview is at the core of human behavior since it helps define perceptions of reality and instructs the individual on how to function effectively within their perceived reality.

Worldview and Culture

The relationship between worldview and the study of intercultural communication cannot be overstated. Most experts agree that culture supplies most of a person's worldview. And more importantly, at least for the purposes of this book, it is a worldview that is shared by others. Remember that, as we noted in Chapter 1, culture is often described as a shared mindset. As Haviland, Prins, Walrath, and McBride point out, worldviews represent "the collective body of ideas that members of a culture generally share concerning the ultimate shape and substance of their reality."[4] It is these collective ideas that members of each culture use "in constructing, populating, and anticipating social worlds."[5] Kraft makes the same point in the following manner: "Every social group has a worldview—a set of more or less systematized beliefs and values in terms of which the group evaluates and attaches meaning to the reality that surrounds it."[6] This connection to culture is even more obvious if you recall that culture is automatic and unconscious; therefore, so are most worldviews. Hall reinforces this point when he writes:

> Often, worldviews operate at an unconscious level, so that we are not even aware that other ways of seeing the world are either possible or legitimate. Like the air we breathe, worldviews are a vital part of who we are but not a part we usually think much about.[7]

Dana further underscores the significance of worldview to the study of intercultural communication by reminding you of the collective nature of worldview:

> Worldview provides some of the unexamined underpinnings for perception and the nature of reality as experienced by individuals who share a common culture. The worldview of a culture functions to make sense of life experiences that might otherwise be construed as chaotic, random, and meaningless. Worldview is imposed by collective wisdom as a basis for sanctioned actions that enable survival and adaptation.[8]

Expressions of Worldview

As our earlier discussion indicated, worldviews deal with a broad range of topics, such as

- What is the purpose of life.
- Is the world ruled by law, chance, or "God"?
- What is the right way to live?
- How did the world begin?
- What happens when we die?

At the same time as they deal with these types of momentous questions, worldviews also govern life in small ways and provide direction for the more practical features of living. As Hoebel writes, "In selecting its customs for day-to-day living, even the little things, the society chooses those ways that accord with its thinking and predilections—ways that fit its basic postulates as to the nature of things and what is desirable and what is not."[9] The

pervasive impact of worldview is so extensive that Olayiwola concluded that a culture's worldview even influences the social, economic, and political life of a nation.[10]

The Importance of Worldview

The importance of examining the crucial issues associated with worldview is clearly identified by Pennington: "If one understands a culture's worldview and cosmology, reasonable accuracy can be attained in predicting behaviors and motivations in other dimensions."[11] For our purposes, "predicting behavior" is a kind of shorthand for understanding how other people perceive the world and communicate within that world. You can see both the perceptual and communicative components of worldview in the following examples.

- The Islamic worldview provides insight into the Islamic culture's perception of women. As Bianquis points out, "Generally speaking, woman as an individual was subordinated to man both by the Quran and the Hadith. God created woman from a fragment of man's body that she might serve him."[12]
- You can also observe a culture's worldview as it applies to the perception of nature. For example, many environmentalists disavow the biblical tradition that tells people that God wants them to be masters over the earth. They say that the following admonition from Genesis promotes a worldview that perceives nature and the environment in a somewhat different light: "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."[13]
- As noted, other worldviews produce different attitudes toward nature. The Shinto religion encourages an aesthetic appreciation of nature in which the focus is on reality and not heaven—a reality that makes nature supreme. Shintoism prescribes an aesthetic love of the land, in whole and in part. Every hill and lake, every mountain and river is dear. Cherry trees, shrines, and scenic resorts are indispensable to a full life. People perceive them as lasting things among which their ancestors lived and died. Here their ancestral spirits look on and their families still abide. People thus preserve nature so that nature can preserve the family.[14]

Another link between worldview and behavior can be seen in how a culture perceives the business arena. In two classic texts, Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, the bond between religion, commerce, and production is examined. Both authors conclude that there is a direct connection. Bartels reaffirms that link to contemporary times when he writes, "The foundation of a nation's culture and the most important determinant of social and business conduct are the religious and philosophical beliefs of a people. From these beliefs spring role perceptions, behavior patterns, codes of ethics and the institutionalized manner in which economic activities are performed."[15] Even the manner in which a culture conducts its business can be reflected in its worldview. For example, if a culture values "out-of-awareness" processes and intuitive problem solving, it might reach conclusions in a manner much different from that of a culture that values the scientific method. Nisbett provides a succinct summary of these differences:

> Thus, 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.[16]

We have attempted in this introduction to make it clear that worldview, perception, and communication are bound together. Gold illustrates this relationship between one's spiritual view and how that worldview determines the manner in which people live:

> Ask any Tibetan or Navajo about one's place in the scheme of things and the answer will inevitably be that we must act, speak, and think respectfully and reasonably toward others. Navajos say that we are all people: earth-surface walkers, swimmers, crawlers, flyers, and sky and water people. Tibetans know that we are humans, animals, worldly gods and demigods, ghosts and hell beings, and a host of aboriginal earth powers. Regardless of category or description, we're all inextricably connected through a system of actions and their effects, which can go according to cosmic order or fall out of synchrony with it.[17]

Forms of Worldview

We have already said that your worldview originates in your culture, is transmitted via a multitude of channels, is composed of numerous elements, and can take a variety of forms.[18] Of this "variety of forms," experts seem to believe that the most significant of these worldview forms can be classified as either religious or nonreligious (often referred to as *secular and humanistic*).[19] As you would suspect, religious and nonreligious worldviews intersect on a number of different questions, yet they often have dissimilar answers for inquiries concerning life, death, human nature, ways of knowing, and the like. Let us pause for a moment and look at these two worldviews in general terms before we move to a specific analysis of each of them.

RELIGION AS A WORLDVIEW

Religion as a worldview has been found in every culture for thousands of years. As Haviland and his colleagues specify, "worldview is intricately intertwined with religious beliefs and practices."[20] Put in slightly different terms, "All societies have spiritual beliefs and practices [generally referred to as] religion."[21] The human need to confront important issues is so universal that there is no known "group of people anywhere on the face of the earth who, at any time over the past 10,000 years, have been without some manifestation of spirituality or religion."[22] And, as is the case with all deep structure elements, the long history of religion is directly tied to culture. Coogan repeats the same important point when he writes, "A belief in the existence of a reality greater than the human has served as a definer and creator of cultures."[23] Because religion is such a vital characteristic of culture, we shall, later in this chapter, spend a great deal of time looking at how religion shapes a culture's view of reality.

Sonya Pongsavas

Religion as a worldview has been found in every culture for thousands of years.

SECULARISM AS A WORLDVIEW

The idea of secularism has been a part of the human experience for as long as people have been concerned with questions about the meaning of life and explanations about death. As early as circa 400 B.C., Plato even talked about the portion of humankind that did not believe in the existence of any of the gods. As Markham points out, this worldview "traces its roots from ancient China, classical Greece and Rome, through the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, to the scientific revolution of the modern world."[24] Like traditional religions, secularism has experienced times of great interest as well as periods of decline. Recently, at least in the United States, two events have again brought the topic of secularism to the forefront. These occurrences have been the current debate of creationism versus evolution and the thrust of religion into the political arena. The popularizing of these two issues has also produced a flood of new books on the topic of secularism. It should not be surprising that people are curious about the topic, since there are millions of people who adhere to some kind of secular philosophy and worldview that claims a disbelief in or denial of the existence of God, or who profess to be nonreligious.[25]

We should point out that, as with traditional religions, there are many definitions for the term *secularism*. In addition, there are a host of words and phrases used to describe this worldview (such as *atheism*, *agnosticism*, *deism*, and *secular humanism*). However, like religious traditions, secularism, regardless of the name it goes by, does have some core beliefs. For example, as we mentioned earlier, at the heart of secularism "is the view

that human beings can get along fine without God."[26] This core premise is based on the belief that there is a social order and deep structure belief system that can exist without God or organized religion. Not only do secularists deny the existence of God, but they also take evolution as a fact, since they usually hold a strong belief in the centrality of science and the scientific method. They also maintain that because death is final and there is no heaven or hell, a person should engage in acts that contribute to the good of humanity in this world. In fact, the word "secular" is actually the Latin word for "of this world." Robert Ingersoll, a famous American political figure, orator, and secularist, talked about good deeds in this lifetime when he said, "Secularism teaches us to be good here and now."

SPIRITUALITY AS A WORLDVIEW

While the notion of spirituality is a concept that has been discussed for over a thousand years, recently the concept has reemerged and gained a large following, especially in the United States. Part of that appeal is that spirituality, especially as defined by its followers, directly relates to the American value of individualism. This is because at the core of this worldview is the belief that each person can use his or her individual resources to discover inner peace. Thomas Paine, the American pamphleteer and the author of *Common Sense*, expressed this same view when he remarked, "My own mind is my own church." Carvalho and Robinson underscore this important distinction between religion and personal spirituality when they write:

> Religion is typically experienced within a social institution with commonly shared traditions, sacred texts, beliefs, and worship practices. Religious institutions usually have a governing structure with designated leaders. Spirituality, on the other hand, is part of each person that searches for purpose, meaning, worth, and wonder, often in quest of an ultimate value or the holy.[27]

As you can tell from what we have written about spirituality, it is more of a personal search rather than a way of having the answers to life's largest questions imposed by something outside the person. Followers of this approach would say that knowing yourself will give you a sense of purpose, allow you to achieve your full potential, and connect you to others and a "higher source." They would also say that your spirituality can be expressed in a host of ways, ranging from contemplation and art to meditation, prayer, and even traditional religious worship.

This brief analysis of spirituality should show you that it contains a number of notions that are general and hard to pin down, which for some people is part of its appeal. It also should be noted that spirituality has many of the same goals found in organized religions (inner peace, a link with nature, a search for meaning in life, etc.). The major difference, as we noted, is that spirituality uses some atypical methods of achieving those goals.

Spirituality attempts to focus on the sacred aspects of life instead of the materialistic ones. Unlike organized religion, spirituality seeks to challenge the individual rather than the collective. In addition, spirituality does not expect or require a distinguishing format or traditional organization.

Religion

The Enduring Significance of Religion

You will recall that in the last chapter we talked about a culture's deep structure and the social institutions that are part of that structure. Religion, as we pointed out, is one of those institutions. Kimball makes this important point in the following manner: "For the vast majority of people worldwide, their religious tradition—like family, tribe, or nation—anchors them in the world. Religious traditions provide structure, discipline, and social participation in a community."[28] Award winning author Thomas Friedman used the colorful image of an olive tree and its deep and stable roots in the title of his book *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* to underscore the powerful and enduring quality of religion to a collection of people.[29] You can see the importance of religion's collective force in the word "religion" itself. "The word *religion* comes from the Latin word *religare*, which means 'to tie.'"[30] The obvious implication is that a religion ties people to what is sacred.

What is intriguing about religion is that it has been linking people together while creating and preserving their cultures' worldviews for thousands of years. Whether through institutions such as the Catholic Church, spiritual and social leaders like the Buddha and Confucius, or the teachings of the Bible, Vedas, Koran, Torah, and I Ching, people have always felt a need to look outside themselves for the values they use to manage their lives. It appears that for thousands of years billions of people have agreed, consciously or unconsciously, with the Latin proverb that tells you, "A man devoid of religion is like a horse without a bridle." Perhaps religion's most enduring aspect has been its attempt to address questions about mortality and immortality, suffering, and the origins of the universe. As Malefijt notes, "Religion provides explanations and assigns values to otherwise inexplicable phenomena."[31] Religion also helps its adherents deal with issues related to human conduct by serving "as a mechanism of social control" by

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Religion links its followers together as they search for guidance and counsel.

establishing notions of right and wrong, transferring part of the burden of decision making from individuals to supernatural powers, and reducing "stress and frustration that often leads to social conflict."[32] Nanda adds to the list of functions religion provides when she observes that religion "deals with the nature of life and death, the creation of the universe, the origin of society and groups within the society, the relationship of individuals and groups to one another, and the relation of humankind to nature."[33] You will notice that the items highlighted by Nanda offer credence to the basic theme of this chapter: that the deep structure of culture deals with issues that matter most to people. Whether they are wondering about the first cause of all things, or the reason for natural occurrences such as comets, floods, lightning, thunder, drought, famine, disease, or an abundance of food, many people rely on religious explanations. Smith eloquently expresses the steadfast importance of religion to the psychological welfare of most people:

> When religion jumps to life it displays a startling quality. It takes over. All else, while not silenced, becomes subdued and thrown into a supporting role. . . . It calls the soul to the highest adventure it can undertake, a proposed journey across the jungles, peaks, and deserts of the human spirit.[34]

Religion and the Study of Intercultural Communication

It is very likely that you have asked yourself the following question: "Why am I studying about religion in a course dealing with intercultural communication?" We would suggest such a query is a good one, and one worthy of an answer. Our reply comes in two parts. First, religion, perception, and behavior are inexplicitly linked. Second, never in the history of civilization has the behavioral dimension of religion been so widespread, relevant, and volatile.

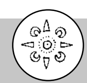
RELIGION AND BEHAVIOR

Speaking of the long history of religion, Osborne offers an excellent preview to the notion that religion and behavior can not be separated when she writes, "Worship of the sacred was not something separate from the daily life—It was life."[35] What Osborne is saying is that religion not only deals with "cosmic" issues, but also focuses on personal and cultural matters. This significance can be found in the words of Smith when he writes, "The surest way to the heart of a people is through their religion."[36] The "heart" that Smith speaks of is not theology but the emotional dimensions of religion. Grondona makes the same point when he asserts, "Throughout history, religion has been the richest source of values."[37] This connection between values and religion is also made by Smart: "Western culture is bound up with Catholicism and Protestantism; Sri Lankan civilization with Buddhism; the modern West with humanism; the Middle East with Islam; Russia with Orthodoxy; India with Hinduism; and so on."[38]

Prothero becomes even more specific when highlighting the bond between religion, culture, and behavior:

> To understand foreign policy on Tibet, for example, one needs to know something about Buddhist monasticism and the Dalai Lama. To follow the ramifications of the 'under God'

language of the Pledge of Allegiance, one needs to know something about the nuances of both atheism and polytheism. And to fully engage in debates about the war in Iraq, one needs to be informed about *jihad* and the Islamic tradition of martyrdom (a tradition, it might be noted, that Muslims adapted from Christians and Jews.)[39]

REMEMBER THIS 

All religious traditions ask their member to "live their religion," since religion, at its core, provides its members with guidelines on how to treat other people and how to achieve a peaceful existence.

What we want you to take away from this section is the realization that religion involves both theology and everyday experiences. As Lamb observes, "It is clear that religion and culture are inextricably entwined."[40] Guruge takes much the same stance when he observes that "religion and civilization seem to have gone hand in hand in the evolution of human society to an extent that one could conclude that they are coequal and coterminous."[41]

THE STUDY OF RELIGION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

From globalization to the rise of religious extremists, to domestic changes in demographics, to debates between secularists and evangelical Christians, you are confronted with the importance of religion at every turn. Braswell buttresses our position when he writes, "Peoples of religion are no longer long distances from each other. Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians are highly mobile populations that have crossed geographical and cultural boundaries to meet and live among each other."[42] Richter and his coauthors state it this way, "The chances are that the new neighbor who moves next door may be a Christian, Jew, Hindu, Muslim, or Jain. Thus learning about religions new to us may, in our global society, be simply inevitable."[43] This need for learning becomes more critical when you consider the degree of violence now associated with asserting religious convictions. Kimball makes the same point rather bluntly when he writes, "With globalism a defining reality in our world today, it is urgent for us to assess the real and potential dangers posed by extremists with particular religious traditions."[44] There are, of course, a multitude of examples where religious clashes and dangers can be observed. In Iraq, for instance, clashes between Shiites and Sunni have caused thousands of deaths.[45] Much of northern Nigeria is plagued by deadly violence involving Christians and Muslims.[46] Relations between many Catholics and Protestants remain tense in Northern Ireland. Iran and Israel exchanged spiteful and vengeful words over a conference, held by Iran's President Mahmound Ahmadinejad, intended to prove to that the Holocaust never occurred.[47] In the United States there are countless reports documenting the negative treatment of American Muslims.[48]

We end this section by restating our conviction that understanding what people believe about how the world looks and operates is important to the study of intercultural communication. As Paden reminds us, "The study of religion . . . prepares us to encounter not only other centers and calendars, and numerous versions of the sacred and profane, but also to decipher and appreciate different modes of language and behavior. Toward that end, knowledge about others plays its indispensable role."[49]

Selecting Worldviews for Study

With thousands of religions, cults, movements, philosophies, and worldviews to choose from, how can we decide which orientations to examine? From animism to Zoroastrianism, from Rastafarianism to Scientology, from secularism to the approximately eight hundred religious denominations found in the United States alone,[50] how do we choose which worldviews to include and which to exclude? Drawing on the research of religious scholars, we have decided to examine Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. And while we grant the importance of other religious traditions and worldviews, our decision was based on three widely accepted criteria—numbers, diffusion, and relevance.

First, while statistics of the world's religions are only approximations, most studies reveal that worldwide, Christianity and Islam have over a billion followers each, and there are over 800 million Hindu devotees.[51] Second, by including diffusion as a criterion we are referring to the notion of dispersion of a religion throughout the world. For example, while the Jewish population is numerically small (approximately 14 million worldwide), Jews are spread throughout the world. In fact, because of thousands of years of persecution and a long history of moving from country to country, only one-third of all Jews live in Israel. The rest can be found in hundreds of other places throughout the world.[52] Propelled by missionary zeal, Christianity and Islam are also diffused throughout the world. In fact, although many Africans, such as the Yoruba and the Nuer, still follow traditional religions, most Africans, because of colonization and missionaries, are either Christians or Muslims.[53]

Finally, the six traditional religions are worthy of serious study because they are as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago. As Carmody and Carmody note: "When we speak of the great religions we mean the traditions that have lasted for centuries, shaped hundreds of millions of people, and gained respect for their depth and breadth."[54] Because of this respect and longevity, we agree with Smith when he states that these "are the faiths that every citizen should be acquainted with, simply because hundreds of millions of people live by them."[55]

In the remainder of the chapter, we will endeavor to acquaint you with these six faiths. But before we talk about each of the major traditions in detail, we need to mention their similarities. We have said repeatedly that it is often similarities rather than differences that lead to intercultural understanding.

Religious Similarities

It should not be surprising that there are numerous similarities among the world's great religions since they all have the same major goal—to make life and death comprehensible for their followers. As Kimball points out, "despite distinctive worldviews and conflicting truth claims," most "religious traditions function in similar ways and even share some foundational teachings."[56]

Let us now look at some of these similarities.

SPECULATION

Most people, from the moment of birth to the time of their death, ask many of the same questions and face many of the same challenges concerning bewilderments and uncertainties about life. As Osborne notes, "They all express awe and humility before

Sonya Pongsavas

Religion attempts to help people understand life and cope with death.

the mysteries of the universe."[57] From creation stories, such as the Bible's book of Genesis, to detailed descriptions of heaven and hell, all religions assist us in understanding where people came from, why they are here, what happens when they die, and why there is suffering. In short, it falls to religion to supply the answers to these difficult and universal questions.

SACRED SCRIPTURES

At the heart of each of the world's main religious traditions lies a body of sacred wisdom—wisdom that must be transmitted to the tradition's current members and to the generations that follow. In this sense, "A religion's scriptures are the repository of its essential principles and the touchstone for its formulations of doctrine."[58] As Crim points out, "Sacred scriptures express and provide identity, authorization, and ideals for the people of the tradition."[59] It is important to notice that the word "sacred" is used when describing these writings. Matthews clearly identifies why that word is used: "Each religion believes its sacred writings have divine or spirit-inspired origin. They were either written or spoken by God, written by divinely guided humans, or spoken by teachers of deep spiritual insight."[60] In nearly all instances those "insights" are directly linked to specific individuals who are recognized as having special significance. These individuals are often called the "founders" of the religion. They are authority figures who provide guidance and instruction. For Jews it is Abraham and Moses. In the Muslim faith, it is a supreme all-knowing God, called *Allah* in Arabic, who used Muhammad as a conduit to deliver his important message.

In some cases, the wise counsel comes from a philosopher such as Buddha or a sage such as Confucius. For Christians the authority is Jesus, "the Son of God." It is important

to remember that these authorities are significant "because they found or heard some message or teaching from God, from gods, or from human wisdom deeper and more profound than most people have ever experienced."[61] Regardless of the person, all traditions have someone to turn to for emotional and spiritual direction.

Although later in the chapter we will say more about sacred writings, and the people associated with them, for now let us briefly touch on some important religious texts as a means of underscoring the notion of commonality while at the same time increasing your knowledge of worldviews different from your own. The Bible, consisting of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, originally written in Hebrew, and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, originally written in Greek, serves as the textual centerpiece of Christianity. For Jews, the Hebrew Bible, which comprises the books of the Old Testament, is an important document that has lasted thousands of years and offers guidance even today. The Koran, which Muslims believe was dictated to the prophet Muhammad by God, is written in classical Arabic. For Muslims, according to Crystal, "the memorization of the text in childhood acts simultaneously as an introduction to literacy."[62] In Hinduism, the sacred writings are found in the Vedas, including the Bhagavad-Gita. These divine wisdoms cover a wide range of texts and are written in Sanskrit. The Pali Canon, based on oral tradition, contains the teaching of Buddha. "Pali became the canonical language for Buddhists from many countries, but comparable texts came to exist in other languages, such as Chinese and Japanese, as the religion evolved."[63] For the Confucian tradition, people turn to the Analects, a collection of works that has for centuries helped shape the thoughts and actions of billions of people.

RITUALS

We begin our discussion of religious rituals by turning to one of the "authorities" we have just mentioned—Confucius. In Analects 8.2, Confucius noted the value of ritual when he said, "Without ritual, courtesy is tiresome; without ritual, prudence is timid;

Ritual is part of every religious tradition.

Robert Fonseca

without ritual, bravery is quarrelsome; without ritual, frankness is hurtful."[64] Rituals, whether they be diminutive or essential, are practiced by all religions. Smart offers an excellent restatement of this idea when she writes:

> Most place a heavy emphasis on ritual. The Catholic is enjoined to attend Mass weekly. The Muslim is told to pray five times daily, according to a set formula. The Hindu attends temple rituals frequently. The Theravada Buddhist will often make a trip to the temple to pay his or her respects to the Buddha. The Protestant typically has a worship service with a sermon as a vital part of their ritual.[65]

Just what are these religious rituals? In their strictest form, "Ritual consists of symbolic actions that represent religious meaning."[66] The function of ritual to a religion and culture is clearly spelled out by Malefijt: "Ritual recalls past events, preserving and transmitting the foundations of society. Participants in the ritual become identified with the sacred past, thus perpetuating traditions as they re-establish the principles by which the group lives and functions."[67] By engaging in rituals, members not only recall and reaffirm important beliefs; they also feel spiritually connected to their religion, develop a sense of identity by increasing social bonds with those who share their views, and sense that their life has meaning and structure. According to Haviland and colleagues, "Rituals, or ceremonial acts, are not all religious in nature. . . . Ritual serves to relieve social tensions and reinforce a group's collective bonds. More than this, it provides a means of marking many important events and lessening the social disruption and individual suffering of crises such as death."[68] As you might expect, rituals, like so many aspects of culture, are not instinctive, so in order to endure they must be passed from one generation to the next.

As we noted in our introduction to this chapter, rituals take a variety of forms. They include traditions such as the lighting of candles or incense, the wearing of certain attire, and sitting, standing, or kneeling during prayer. There are rituals dealing with space (Muslims turning toward Mecca when they pray) and others that call attention to events (Christians celebrating Christmas and Easter, and Jews marking the importance of Passover).

The most common of all rituals are rites of passage that mark key stages in the human cycle of life. According to Angrosino, "rites of passage are social occasions marking the transition of members of the group from one important life stage to the next. Birth, puberty, marriage, and death are transition points that are important in many different cultures."[69]

Rituals can also be indirect. A good example of an indirect ritual is the Japanese tea ceremony. At first glance, it would appear that the tea ceremony is simply the preparation and drinking of tea, but the importance of the ritual to Buddhism is far greater. As Paden notes:

> Every detailed act, every move and position, embodies humility, restraint, and awareness. This framing of ordinary action in order to reveal some deeper significance—in this example the values are related to the Zen Buddhist idea of immanence of the absolute in the ordinary—is a common element of ritual behavior.[70]

ETHICS

Robinson and Rodriguez are correct when they write, "Religion has played a prominent role in the regulation of human behavior. Almost every religious tradition discriminates

CONSIDER THIS

All religious traditions treat the topic of ethics and offer specific advice on how to live an ethical life. Why do you think ethics and religion are linked?

between acceptable and unacceptable conduct."[71] In Matthew 19:16, when Jesus is asked, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" you can see the link between ethics and religion as it applies to Christianity. These ethical teachings about what is right and wrong also have much to say about a culture's core values.[72] In most instances the bond between religion and ethics can be seen in specific religious laws. In Judaism, for example, there are "not merely the Ten Commandments but a complex of over six hundred rules imposed upon the community by a Divine Being."[73] When you turn to Islamic ethics, the association between religion, law, and behavior is also apparent. Smart makes this very clear when he writes: "Islamic life has traditionally been controlled by the Law, or *sharia*, which shapes society as both a religious and a political society, as well as shaping the moral life of the individual—prescribing that he should pray daily, give alms to the poor, and so on, and that society should have various institutions, such as marriage, modes of banking, etc."[74]

The Hindus also have strong ethical precepts tied directly to their religion. As Matthews points out:

> Hinduism has a rich moral code. . . . In the Vedas, Rita is the principle of right order in the universe; all things conform to its control. For the individual, the principle of right action is dharma. Dharma is Rita incorporated in the life of individuals.[75]

For the Buddhist, ethical values can be found in Buddha's listing of the four great virtues that all people should strive for: "benevolence, compassion, joy in others' joy, and equanimity."[76] While the words might change, the central message about ethics from Confucius is much the same as the one found in other traditions. Matthews summarizes those principled words in the following paragraph: "The word *reciprocity* is a good description for Confucian ethics. People should avoid doing to others what they would not want done to them. They should do those things that they would like done to themselves."[77]

It is intriguing to discover that many ethical standards, such as Buddha's notion of "joy in others' joy," the Confucian idea of "reciprocity," and the Golden Rule, are found in one form or another in all cultures. As Smith notes, the message of ethics "pretty much tells a cross-cultural story."[78] For example, in addition to the ideal of a Golden Rule, Smith says that all religions declare that people should avoid murder, thieving, lying, and adultery.[79] In addition, they all stress the virtues of "humility, charity, and veracity."[80] According to Coogan, what they all seek to accomplish by the formation of ethical principles is to "enable their adherents to achieve the ultimate objective of the tradition—the attainment of salvation, redemption, enlightenment, and the 'liberation of the soul.'"[81]

SAFE HAVEN

All religions provide their members with a sense of security. Macionis summarizes this sense of security: "Religious beliefs offer the comforting sense that the vulnerable human condition serves a great purpose. Strengthened by such beliefs, people are less likely to collapse in despair when confronted by life's calamities."[82]

CONSIDER THIS

What do most religious traditions have in common?

Before we begin our discussion of the great religions of the world, we need to ask you to keep a few points in mind. First, remember that religion is but one kind of worldview, and even a secular person who says, "There is no God" has likely found answers to the large questions about the nature of truth, how the world operates, life, death, suffering, and ethical relationships. One clear example of a secular worldview would be an extreme form of nationalism. According to Smart, nationalism as a worldview "has many of the same appurtenances of a religion."[83] That is to say, its adherents have rituals, ethical precepts, and the like. The important point, as noted by Ridenour, is to "realize that everyone has a worldview whether or not he or she can recognize or state it."[84]

Second, as Hendry says, "Religion pervades many spheres that others might call secular and it cannot easily be separated from them."[85] It is often difficult to draw a line between secularism and a subtle manifestation of religion. What one person might call "religion" or "worldview," another person might call "philosophy." For example, when a group of people prefers intuitive wisdom to "scientific facts" as a means of discovering reality, they may do so without evoking the teachings of Buddhism or Hinduism. For our purposes, the labeling is not nearly as important as the notion that a culture's heritage includes ways of dealing with timeless and fundamental questions.

Finally, it is not our intent to offer a course on world religion, but rather to isolate those aspects of worldview and religion that are most important to the study of intercultural communication. Hence, we have omitted much of the theology and dogma of the world's great religions and concentrated on ways in which religion "gets acted out." As Coogan notes, "The world's major religious traditions have both reflected and shaped the values of the societies of which they have been an inseparable element."[86] In short, we, like Smith, believe that the locus of religion is in the person and in human interaction.[87]

Christianity

We start with Christianity, which is the largest of all the traditions: over one-third of the world's population claims some sort of affiliation with it. In a relatively short period of time, Christianity has spread its beliefs throughout the world. There are thousands of groups or denominations that can be classified as Christian. For example, the *World Christian Encyclopedia* lists 33,800 different Christian denominations worldwide.[88] Historically, Christianity has been composed of three major branches. These are the Roman Catholic Church, under the guidance of the papacy in Rome; the Eastern Orthodox Churches, with members concentrated in Eastern Europe, Russia, Ukraine, the Balkans, and Central Asia; and Protestantism, which embodies a host of denominations such as Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, and Episcopalians.[89] While each of these branches and each of their subsets, has some unique features, they nevertheless share many rituals, beliefs, traditions, basic characteristics, and tenets. In fact, one of the strengths of Christianity throughout the centuries has been its ability to maintain its basic core while being adaptive and varied. As Wilson points out, "Christianity can be seen for what it was historically and what it continues to be today: a living, ever-changing religion which, like any other religion, owes its vitality to its diversity."[90]

CORE ASSUMPTIONS

At the heart of Christianity is a set of three fundamental principles, all of which point to the notion that Christianity offers its followers beliefs, a way of life, and a community of people. These three common features have their roots in the theology of Christianity. Hale expands on these basic assumptions in the following paragraph:

> Essentially, Christianity is a monotheistic tradition centered on faith in God (the eternal creator who transcends creation and yet is active in the world) and in Jesus Christ as the savior and redeemer of humankind. Christianity holds that God became incarnate—fully human—as Jesus of Nazareth. Christians believe that Jesus died on a cross and was resurrected, physically rising from the dead. The belief in the Trinity, the sacred mystery of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one, triune ("three-in-one") God is central to the Christian tradition.[91]

As you can observe from the above summary, Christians believe in a single God who created the universe and also "gave the world" his only son, Jesus Christ. Noss and Noss emphasize the importance of Jesus to Christianity when they note, "In the belief that Jesus is the clearest portrayal of the character of God all the rest of Christian doctrine is implied."[92] An essential part of that doctrine is the belief that humans are created "in the image of God." As such, "humans differ from all other animals in that they have responsibility to God. Humans are accountable for how they live their lives."[93]

CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS

Of the thousands of directives that Jesus and his apostles carried to the world, let us select a few of those that have most shaped the Christian tradition and apply them to the study of intercultural communication.

Organized Worship. For Christians the church serves a variety of purposes. Not only is it a "house of worship" and a place of great reverence, but it is also a kind of community—a place where people gather in groups and share a common identity. For our purposes it is the social dimension of Christianity that offers insight into the communication aspects of that tradition. What we are suggesting is stated by Braswell when he writes, "since its inception Christianity has emphasized and encouraged a gathered community, the church."[94] So deeply rooted is the idea of a communal spirit in Christianity that in the Bible (Acts 4: 32–37), St. Luke portrays the origin of the church as a "group of Christians who shared everything they had, and lived in a genuine community."[95] Even today you can observe the strong influence of cooperative spirit in how many churches have special services for young children, special sanctuaries for baptisms, and numerous social gatherings.

This view of "community" we just described has a theological foundation. Christian theology believes in organized worship as a means of proclaiming God's message.[96] As Carmody and Carmody note, "Jesus' view of the self was relational. The self was not a monad existing in isolation."[97] Jesus believed that "the closer people drew to God, the closer they could draw to one another."[98] Remember that even at the Last Supper, Jesus shared his final meal with his twelve disciples rather than being alone. Our point is that this notion of organized worship has contributed to the social dimension of Western cultures. Americans are social creatures and belong to numerous clubs, committees, and organizations. The French historian de Tocqueville pointed out over two hundred

years ago that Americans had a large series of networks and associations that went well beyond their family unit. Perhaps one reason for such behavior can be found in comparing Christianity to most Asian religions. In Asia, one's spiritual life is conducted in solitude; in the West, God's "message" is shared with others. Stated another way, we are comparing a single person in meditation to a collection of people in prayer.

Individual. At the same time that Christianity encourages community, it also stresses the importance and uniqueness of each individual. Most scholars maintain that Christianity and Judaism were the first religions that placed "greater emphasis on the autonomy and responsibility of the self."[99] As McGuire points out, Christianity "is characterized by an image of the dynamic multidimensional self, able (within limits) to continually change both self and the world."[100] In short, Christianity and Judaism are the religious traditions that "discovered the individual."[101] Before the arrival of these two religions, people were seen as members of tribes, communities, or families, and behaved in ways that reflected the collective nature of their existence. While family and community remained important, as it is even today, Christianity highlighted the significance of each person. An example of the power of self can be seen in the view of salvation, particularly for Protestants. Salvation "is achieved by our own efforts alone and there is a tendency for deeds to count more than prayers."[102] Even the Bible carries examples of individualism. As Woodward notes, "The Gospels are replete with scenes in which Jesus works one-on-one healing this woman's sickness, forgiving that man's sins, and calling each to personal conversion."[103] Summarizing this important point, Woodward adds, "Christianity discovers individuality in the sense that it stresses personal conversion."[104] You also can see the importance of the individual in the part of Christian theology that begins with the assumption that the world is real and meaningful because God created it. Human beings are significant because God created them in his image. The Christian God is a personal God who desires a relationship with his creation.[105] In a culture that values individualism, Christianity is an especially appealing religion in that each person can have a one-on-one bond with God.

Doing. Western culture, as we will discuss in Chapter 5, is one that encourages activity and action. Some of the roots of this approach to life can be found in Christianity and in the manner in which Jesus lived his life. "In Christianity "living in the world" rather than withdrawal from the world was emphasized."[106] From the beginning "the Jesus movement began to send out emissaries" to bring the news about Jesus to all who would listen.[107] Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, once said of Jesus, "He went about doing good."[108] You can further see the link between "doing" and Christianity in Matthew 28:19: "Go therefore and make disciples of nations." Romans 10:13–15 carries much the same message about "doing" when it says, "And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach and bring glad tidings." There are, of course, many other examples of Christianity as a religion with a long tradition of action. For instance, during the Roman era, sick people were cast into the streets because the Romans feared death might result if they remained near a sick person. However, Christians would take a committed role and try to nurse the sick.[109] These are not isolated examples. By all accounts, Jesus would speak with prostitutes, go into people's homes and eat, travel about, and talk to strangers in public places.[110]

The Future. Throughout this book, we discuss cultural attitudes toward time. From those discussions, and from your own observations, you can conclude that Americans

are future oriented—they are always concerned with what will happen next, rather than what is happening in the present. We suggest that one of the reasons for this behavior might have its roots in Christianity. Put in slightly different terms, one of the lessons of Christianity is that the future is important. As Muck points out, for Christians "no matter what happened in the past, it is the future that holds the greatest promise."[111] God forgives mistakes and offers repentance and incentive to move forward. As Blanche and Parkes note, "Christians hold that those who repent of their sins and turn to Jesus Christ will be forgiven and will join him in heaven after death."[112] In this sense, the individual is destined to move on. Even the notion of a heaven accents the future. You can see that emphasis on the future in Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." In short, built into Christian ideology is a positive and optimistic outlook toward the future—a belief that *things will be better in the future*.

Gender. The perception and treatment of women, like most characteristics of Christianity, have been altered and modified with each passing century. However, the enduring legacy for Christian women is, of course, the Garden of Eden story found in Genesis. Many still use this interpretation of womanhood to define women's place within the family, church, and society. Those that adhere to a somewhat fundamentalist belief regarding women turn to the words of Paul when he speaks in 1 Timothy:

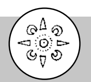
> I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became the transgressor.[113]

Paul also writes that wives should remain "busy at home" and be "subject to their husbands."[114] Ephesians 5:23 is an often-quoted verse used by those who employ a historical analysis of women and the church. This verse says, "The man is the head of woman, just as Christ also is the head of the church. . . . Just as the church is subject to Christ, so must women be to their husbands in everything."

While these sorts of examples are often used to justify placing women in subordinate positions, recent events and a new interpretation of the Bible reveal a view of women that is more consistent with current perceptions. For example, in many Protestant denominations, the number of women clergy is growing rapidly. Some contemporary biblical scholars have even asserted that Jesus might well have been a feminist and to justify their claim, offer examples such as those presented here. First, prior to the coming of Jesus, Roman society regarded women as inherently inferior to men. Husbands could divorce their wives, but wives could not divorce their husbands. Jesus banned all divorce. Roman men could marry girls as young as ten or eleven years old. Jesus challenged these practices. Wrote one biblical scholar, "The new religion offered women not only greater status and influence within the church, but also more protection as wives and mothers."[115]

Second, "although he called only men to be apostles, Jesus readily accepted women into his circle of friends and disciples."[116] Defying customs, Jesus invited women to join him at meals. All of this leads Murphy to note, "Women were often prominent in the accounts of his ministry, and he acknowledged the oppression they face."[117] Finally, Jesus helped define a new role for women by giving them greater responsibility. For example, they "shared with men the cultural responsibility for teaching children, as reflected in the proverb: 'My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching.'"[118]

Courage. One of the most enduring legacies of the Jesus story is the message of courage in the face of adversity, which characterizes how Jesus lived and died. Courage is also a trait that runs throughout the American character. As Carmody and Carmody note, "Jesus was courageous."[119] A careful reading of the life of Jesus reveals a man who would not be intimidated by his opponents and repeatedly demonstrated strength and courage in the face of overwhelming odds. Jesus was preaching against what was established doctrine during this period in history. France, writing about Jesus, notes, "He aroused the opposition of leaders."[120] France adds, "He seemed to delight in reversing accepted standards, with his slogan: 'The first shall be last, and the last first.'"[121] Even his practice of mixing with ostracized groups such as the poor and prostitutes was brave. Bravery is a powerful value in the American culture. Here, again, you can see the link between worldview and communication styles.

REMEMBER THIS 

Every worldview and religion seeks to explain the concept of death to its members so that they understand this inescapable conclusion to a person's life.

NOTIONS ABOUT DEATH

In some cultures, people see death as a natural and unavoidable consequence of being born. In other cultures, people do not perceive death as an end of their existence, but rather as the beginning of yet another "life." Regardless of what explanation is advanced, religious and secular traditions attempt to enlighten their members as to what death is. Kramer maintains that explanations of death, regardless of the tradition, examine the following five questions:

> What is the purpose of death? Does existence end at death? If not, what happens after death? Are we re-embodied in a similar form or in a different form? Is there a final judgment? And how are we to prepare for our own dying?[122]

The Christian answer to these five questions is not a simple one. That is to say, because of the large variety of Christian denominations and the various interpretations of both the Old and New Testament, there are numerous explanations of the "afterlife." However, at the core of each is the belief that there is an eternal life, and that salvation is possible through the caring and loving creator. Many turn to John 11: 25–26 for the following words of guidance and inspiration: "I am the resurrection. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies, he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"[123] A similar passage is found in Peter 1: 3–4: ". . . God has something stored up for you in heaven, where it will never decay or be ruined or disappear."[124] These words tell Christians that death is not something to be feared. As Wilson points out, "The Christian churches teach that the human soul is immortal and was originally destined to spend eternity in the presence of God in heaven."[125] So important is the notion of heaven that some religious scholars have found that the words *heaven* and *eternal life* are mentioned over six hundred times in the New Testament.[126] Angrosino describes this important relationship between God and heaven in the following manner:

> The aim of the Christian is to be with God in heaven for all eternity. To that end, Christians have focused on three theological virtues, so called because they derive from God, are defined in relation to God, and are believed to lead to God. These virtues are faith, hope, and charity.[127]

While heaven awaits those who have lived virtuous and righteous lives, "those who are wicked will endure in hell."[128] Because the idea of hell was a late arrival to Christianity (not introduced until the writings of Luke and Matthew), there are a number of versions and descriptions of what hell is and how one becomes a candidate for this "nightmare." In some of the early descriptions, particularly those advanced by Luke, details are scarce and never graphic.[129] But other accounts of hell, especially those suggested by Matthew, are much more explicit and detailed. According to Panati, "Matthew argues, again and again, that Hell exists, is sheer torture, and is reserved for the damned who will be cast 'into the furnace of fire; there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'"[130] Not only do portrayals of hell differ, but who goes to hell instead of heaven is also left to some mild speculation. In most accounts, hell is reserved for people who die without accepting Christ or who have "sinned" and not repented. There is yet another more modern argument that suggests that a loving God would not be party to anything as cruel and sordid as hell, and therefore God needs to be trusted. Regardless of how heaven and hell are defined in various Christian traditions, one conclusion is obvious—Christian doctrine maintains that there is an afterlife, which, as we shall see later in the chapter, is not the case in all religious traditions.

Judaism

Although there are fewer than fifteen million Jews worldwide, representing less than 2 percent of the world's population,[131] their geographical distribution and their interest in politics, arts, literature, medicine, finance, and the law have, for thousands of years, made them an important and influential group in whichever country they lived in. Prothero makes much the same point when he notes that Judaism is "the smallest in terms of adherents but one of the most historically influential."[132] Smith estimates "that one-third of our Western civilization bears the marks of its Jewish ancestry."[133] In addition, Judaism "generated the religious outlook that gave birth to Christianity and Islam."[134]

Judaism is believed to have been founded in approximately 1300 B.C., when twelve Israelite tribes came to Canaan from Mesopotamia. Later, many of them settled in Egypt where they were held as slaves until they fled to Jerusalem in about 1200 B.C. Under the guidance and leadership of Moses, the Jewish religion began to take shape. In its nearly four thousand years of historical development, the Jewish religion and the people who practice it have exhibited not only a penchant for continuity but also a remarkable adaptability. Torstrick speaks of this persistent ability to adapt in the following manner:

> The Jewish faith developed over a 4,000-year period. Over that span of time, it has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to adapt and persevere, to absorb elements from the civilizations and cultures which it has come into contact with, but to also retain its own unique identity and heritage.[135]

CORE ASSUMPTIONS

Judaism is one of the three monotheistic world religions, the others being Christianity and Islam. At the foundation of all monotheism is the notion of universalism, which means a belief that if there is only one God, then this God is the God of all humans. However, Judaism, as Torstrick notes, "combined monotheism with a specific type of

particularism.[136] That uniqueness is at the core of Judaism, or as Banks says, "At the heart of the Jewish religion lies the existence of a covenant between God and his people."[137] Matlins and Magida offer an excellent summary of the covenant in the following explanation:

> Central to this covenant is the concept of being 'chosen' as a people, for as Moses tells his people in the Bible: "The Lord has chosen you to be a people for His own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 12:2).[138]

In Jewish theology, this distinctive consideration was never meant to give special advantages to the Jews, but only to increase their responsibilities and therefore their hardships.[139] From circumcision to the keeping of the Sabbath, signs of the covenant abound in Jewish culture and religion.[140] It is this covenant that is at the heart of why Jews consider themselves God's "chosen people."

The Jewish worldview is expressed through a number of concepts basic to the faith: (1) Jews "believe in one universal and eternal God, the creator and sovereign of all that exists,"[141] (2) humans are inherently pure and good and are given free will,[142] (3) there is no belief in original sin,[143] (4) one can, however, commit sin by breaking the commandments,[144] and (5) humans must be obedient to the God-given commandments in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible). These five concepts compose a belief system stressing the secular notion that order must be maintained if Jews are to have a collective and peaceful life.

Judaism, like the other major traditions, has experienced a series of different offshoots and forms since its initial inception. While the core of the religion has remained the same since its inception, Judaism has now branched into three large groups: Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative Judaism. The Orthodox tradition is the oldest of the three branches "and was the only form of Jewish practice prior to the eighteenth century."[145] Orthodox Jews believe that the Torah (the Five Books of Moses) came directly from God and not only contains spiritual advice such as the Commandments, but also laws regarding daily practices and dietary recommendations (no shellfish or pork, etc.)."[146] For nearly all Orthodox Jews, religious services are still conducted in Hebrew.

Reform Judaism was an attempt in the late eighteenth century to modernize many of the long-established Jewish practices so that Jews worldwide could better assimilate into non-Jewish communities without losing their Jewish identity.[147] Conducting prayer services in the local language has been one of the major attempts at making Judaism more progressive. In addition, the use of choirs and musical instruments, and allowing men and women to sit together, are part of the Reform movement.

Conservative Judaism, particularly in the United States, was intended to find a middle ground between the basic traditions of the Orthodox and the modern appendages associated with the Reform movement. Conservatives believe that many of the rules, rituals, and traditions of the Orthodox practice are necessary if Jewish identity is to be maintained.[148] Yet they also hold that Jews must adapt to present-day realities if Judaism is to appeal to each new generation.

It is worth repeating that the two so-called modern branches still believe in the basic laws and teachings of Judaism and have only altered the outward expressions and appearances of the Jewish religion. In short, regardless of what branch of Judaism one follows, it is clear that the Jewish faith is unique in that it is both a culture and a religion. It is common, for example, to find nonreligious Jews who identify fully with the

culture but not with the theology. Fisher and Luyster elaborate on this point: "Judaism has no single founder, no central leader or group making theological decisions; Judaism is a people, a very old family. This family can be defined either as a religious group or a national group."[149] Judaism penetrates every area of human existence, providing humankind with a means of communicating with both the secular and transcendental worlds.[150]

CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS

Oppression and Persecution. One of the most enduring manifestations of the Jewish tradition has been a history of thousands of years filled with oppression and persecution. As Ehrlich notes, "All too often the story of Jews has been presented as a litany of disasters."[151] Van Doren confirms the same idea: "The history of Judaism and the Jews is a long complicated story, full of blood and tears."[152] Any review of Judaism's past reveals that as early as 1500 B.C. the pharaoh of Egypt made an effort to kill all Jewish males. More hatred and massive killings of Jews occurred during the Spanish Inquisition in 1478, and in 1523 an essay by Martin Luther further intensified hostility against the Jews. Throughout all these experiences Jews continued to believe that God is using them and that suffering, oppression, and persecution were built into the Jewish faith.[153] Prager and Telushkin offer an excellent summary of the long-standing persecution of Jews:

> Only the Jews have had their homeland destroyed (twice), been dispersed wherever they have lived, survived the most systematic attempt in history (aside from that of the Gypsies) to destroy an entire people, and been expelled from nearly every nation among whom they have lived.[154]

And while such actions punctuated Jewish history for thousands of years, it was the Holocaust and the extermination of six million Jews in Europe that told the Jews that anti-Semitism follows them wherever they go. Matthews, in just two sentences, captures the horrors rained upon the Jews during the Holocaust: "In camps such as Auschwitz, they were gassed, and their clothes, possessions, and even body parts were salvaged for the Nazi war effort. Bodies were burned in crematoriums.[155] Even today news reports speak of anti-Semitism being on the rise again in parts of Europe.

What you see is a religious group that, for thousands of years, has experienced murder, exile, and discrimination simply because of its religion. The result of these experiences is that today many Jews have a difficult time trusting non-Jews. Van Doren notes that, in spite of all these hardships:

> Jews are still essentially the same stubborn, dedicated people, now and forever affirming the same three things. First, they are a people of the law as given in the only books of Moses. Second, they are the chosen people of God, having a covenant with him. Third, they are a witness that God is and will be forevermore."[156]

Learning. The Jewish essayist and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel quotes a Jewish saying: "Adam chose knowledge instead of immortality." This saying highlights that a love of learning has been a hallmark of the Jewish religion and culture since its very beginning. As Braswell notes, "Judaism centers on the worship of God, the practice of good deeds, and the love of learning."[157] For thousands of years Jews have made the study of the Talmud (a holy book of over five thousand pages) an important element of Jewish life.[158] Some Hebrew translations of the word *Talmud* actually use the words

"learning," "study," and "teaching."[159] The Jewish prayer book speaks of "the love of learning" as one of three principles of faith.[160] Rosten points out that "As early as the first century, Jews had a system of compulsory education."[161] Jews even have a proverb that states, "Wisdom is better than jewels." Because of this cultural and religious characteristic, it is common for Jews to seek professions centering on education, law, medicine, literature, and the like.

Justice. The pursuit of justice is another manifestation of the Jewish faith. It is also a characteristic deeply rooted in Jewish history. An individual's responsibility and moral commitment to God and other people are detailed in Jewish religious writings. As Markam points out, "The God of Israel taught through his prophets that worship of God without social justice is worthless."[162] In fact, one of the four categories of Jewish law is actually "to ensure moral treatment of others."[163] You can see this concern for justice in everything from ancient Jewish writings to the active role Jews played during the civil rights movement in the 1960s. So deep-seated is this basic precept that Smith believes much of Western civilization owes a debt to the early Jewish prophets for establishing the notion of justice as a major principle for the maintenance of "social order."[164]

Family. As you saw in the last chapter, all societies value the family, but for Jews the family is the locus of worship and devotion. One way they dealt with centuries of hardships was to turn inward and look to the family for strength and courage. On nearly every occasion, be it in the home or the synagogue, the family is an active participant in Jewish life. From circumcisions to Passover seders (ceremonial dinners), to bar or bat mitzvahs, to marriage and death, to the treatment of the elderly, the family and religion are strongly bound together. Rosten offers a clear digest of this link:

> For 4,000 years, the Jewish family has been the very core, mortar, and citadel of Judaism's faith and the central reason for the survival of the Jews as a distinct ethnic group. The Jewish home is a temple, according to Judaic law, custom, and tradition.[165]

The emotional tie to family grows out of two very diverse historical events. First, Jews trace their origins to a single location that gave them a sense of community from the very outset of their existence. Second, while they began in a single location, because of oppression and persecution, Jews have been forced to scatter throughout the world. Because of this tearing apart of their culture, Matlins and Magida point out that "They share a sense of community with and responsibility for Jews throughout the world."[166]

Life Cycles. Closely related to the importance of family is the emphasis Jews place on four life cycles—birth, adulthood, marriage, and death. All of these passages are directly related to Judaism because they "emphasize religious themes."[167] Each of the four observances offers insight into the Jewish character by underscoring some things Jews deem important.

The first ceremony is the circumcision of the male eight days after birth. Robinson and Rodrigues offer an excellent synopsis of the connection between this ritual and the Jewish faith:

> In some ways circumcision celebrates less the birth of the child than the admission of that child into the membership of a religious people. Circumcision is the sign of the covenant

IMAGINE THIS

The Sterns recently arrived from Israel and purchased a new home in a nice neighborhood in Los Angeles. One afternoon some of the neighbors were standing across the street and noticed men dressed in black suits going in and out of the Sterns' home. They also observed that the women were wearing dark clothes. The neighbors quickly concluded that it must be a funeral. Yet they were somewhat confused because they heard loud laughter coming from the house. To the neighbors, it sounded as if there was a party inside the house. They found the noise, laughter, and party atmosphere very upsetting—and told Mrs. Stern the next day when they saw her. They believed the death of anyone was a somber occasion that should not involve any type of merriment.

What happened?

between God and Abraham, and as a descendant of Abraham, the child enters into the covenant community by the same sign as all members in the past have entered.[168]

For the Jew the next rite is the bar mitzvah for males and the bat mitzvah for females. Both events normally take place when the child is thirteen and has "come of age." Like the circumcision, this event also has significant religious and cultural overtones. In fact, the term *bar mitzvah* literally means *son of the commandment*. During this significant occasion, the young person not only leads the religious service, but is also given the honor of reading from the Torah in front of the entire congregation.[169] To commemorate this event, there is usually a very special and elaborate celebration after the service.

The third milestone in the life cycle of the Jew is the wedding, and it too has rituals that bring people back to the core of the religion. For example, after the couple exchanges wedding vows, a glass wrapped in a cloth is ceremonially smashed "as a sober reminder of the destruction of Jerusalem."[170]

The final life cycle event is death, which like the other phases reaffirms religious and cultural principles. As Matthews notes, "Judaism meets this important passage, as all others in a person's life, with distinctive ritual that reinforces identity with the community of believers. The identity is not only with the present community but also with past communities of Jews."[171] So important is this historical notion of community that friends and family, even after the regular seven days of mourning, continue to come together in what Markham calls "the context of a loving and supporting community."[172] Not only do family and friends gather for a religious "community event," but they also invite friends and family to take part in a social gathering to share food, drink, and stories about the deceased.

NOTIONS ABOUT DEATH

Although we have just finished talking about death as the final stage in the Jewish cycle of life, we need to add a few more ideas to this inevitable event. What is interesting about Judaism and death is that there is no one simple explanation regarding their view of an afterlife. There are very few references to life after death in traditional Jewish writings. In fact, "The *Torah*, the most important Jewish text, has no clear reference to afterlife at all."[173] Because of this lack of a precise explanation about death,

we have a situation where "Judaism contains a range of beliefs, from no view of an afterlife to a belief in the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul."[174] The two extreme positions—physical resurrection, and no concept of a personal life after death—are associated with two of the movements we discussed earlier. Orthodox Jews are more likely to "believe in bodily resurrection and physical life after death," while Reform Jews usually believe "that a person lives on in their accomplishments or in the mind of others."[175] Because of this lack of preoccupation with an afterlife, Matthews maintains that "Jewish services lack specific descriptions of life beyond death."[176] Another manifestation of a lack of literature and moralizing about an afterlife is the realistic view about death that Jews often adopt. For Jews, death is a natural process and not viewed as an adversary. As Kramer points out, "The writer of 2 Samuel 14:14 says: 'We must all die; we are like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.'"[177]

Islam

Perhaps at no other time in the history of humankind has it been more important for all citizens of the world to understand the Islamic faith. Hence, we agree with Smith when he says, "Islam is a vital force in the contemporary world."[178] Yet it seems that much of the world does not know about the Islamic faith, and what is known is often colored by hysteria and oversimplification. Noss and Noss are correct when they write:

> The heart of Islam is well hidden from most Westerners, and the outer images of Islamic countries present bewildering contrasts: stern ayatollahs ordering the lash for prostitutes, camel drivers putting down prayer mats in the desert, a sophisticated royal prince discussing international investments, and fiery national liberators proclaiming equality and denouncing Western values.[179]

What appears to have happened is that the events of September 11, 2001, the rhetoric coming from Iran, and the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have forced the world to focus on the available information about Muslims, even though much of it is incomplete, false, or misleading. As Belt states, Islam is the "most misunderstood religion on earth."[180]

The statistical and demographic impact of Islam throughout the world only serves to underscore our need to learn more about this religious tradition. Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world, with about 1.5 billion followers scattered throughout the world.[181] This figure composes over 20 percent of the world's population. We used the word "scattered" as a way of pointing out that the largest share of Muslims, nearly 80 percent, live in places other than Arab lands.[182] Because of immigration, a substantial portion of that percentage lives in the United States. In fact, Islam will soon be the second most commonly practiced religion in the United States, with nearly seven million members.[183] What these large numbers of Muslims mean to most Americans is that face-to-face contact is increasing at a rapid rate. Following the events of 9/11, immigration to the United States from Muslim countries dropped dramatically. However, by 2005, the downward trend had reversed. According to Department of Homeland Security data, in that year "more people from Muslim countries became legal permanent U.S. residents—nearly 96,000—than in any year in the previous two decades. More than 40,000 [Muslims] were admitted [in 2005], the highest annual number since

the terrorist attacks."[184] This number does not include all the Muslim students who are American citizens. In short, whether on the international level or on college campuses, contact with Muslims has become a fact of life. Therefore, we believe that a basic knowledge of Islamic perceptions and beliefs is essential if you are to become a successful intercultural communicator.

ORIGINS

We made an important point in the last chapter about the connection between history, family, and religion. This point is made clear by Sedgwick: "Just as the events of Jesus' life matter to a Christian, and just as the history of Israel matters to a Jew, so the events of early Islam matter to a Muslim. These events, then, are important for us as we try to understand Islam."[185] So essential is history to the study of Islam that we dedicated an entire section to this topic in the previous chapter. However, now we need to return briefly to that history, this time from a religious perspective. Woodward provides a summary of the early origins of Islam, which date back thousands of years:

> The Arabs were mostly polytheists, worshiping tribal deities. They had no sacred history linking them to one universal god, like other Middle Eastern peoples. They had no sacred text to live by, like the Bible; no sacred language, as Hebrew is to Jews and Sanskrit is to Hindus. Above all, they had no prophet sent to them by God, as Jews and Christians could boast.[186]

This initial animistic polytheistic period, with its intertribal hostility, images of carved gods, and major class differences, was fertile ground in which to bring forth a new religion. The process of beginning a new theology was greatly expedited by the arrival of Muhammad (A.D. 570–632). Early in his life, Muhammad was a person known for great insight. For example, as Mir points out, "Muhammad had never taken part in the idol worship of his tribe" and even questioned the legitimacy of such idols.[187] Throughout much of his adulthood, he would retreat into a cave near his home and engage in prayer and meditation. It was during one of these meditative seasons that "the angel Gabriel appeared to him and told him that God had chosen him to be His messenger to all mankind."[188] This epic event was to cast Muhammad forever as the messenger of God. Muslims believe that their God, Allah, had spoke to human beings many times in the past through other prophets. However, it was Muhammad who delivered the religious message and established the social order that was to become Islam. Muhammad was troubled by the idolatry of the Arabs and concerned about the fate of his people on judgment day. These two issues caused Muhammad to suffer a kind of spiritual crisis. After a series of revelations, however, Muhammad became persuaded that there was only one God, and that that God was Allah. From that point on, Muhammad began to preach about the power of Allah. Because he believed that community and religion were one and the same, Muhammad established the city-state that became known as Medina. This fusion of church and state was unique in Muhammad's time.

Along with "God's message," Muhammad was able to preach what was to become known as *particularism*. According to McGuire, "Religious particularism seems to require a sense of opposition: one's own religion is seen as triumphant over some other."[189] This strong element of religious particularism in Muhammad's message encouraged missionary expansion. Muhammad's message was so powerful that when it combined with missionary zeal, within a few centuries Islam was able to establish a presence in Europe,

North Africa, Persia, Jerusalem, Damascus, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Europe, Egypt, and Turkey.[190] As we noted earlier, the growth and popularity of Islam has continued even today; Muslims now "form the majority in more than fifty countries and a substantial minority in many others."[191]

CORE ASSUMPTIONS

As is the case with all religious traditions, the major premises at the heart of the Islamic worldview are far more complex and numerous than the four assumptions we have selected to summarize. However, the four that follow do deserve to be called "core assumptions," for they are the most basic articles of faith for this religion.

One God. The central pronouncement of Islam is that there is only one God. Calverley summarizes this fundamental notion in the following manner: "Islam always has taught that Allah is One, that there is only One God. The first half of the Muslim creed says: 'There is no god at all but Allah.'"[192] In the Koran the idea is stated as follows: "He is God, the One God to Whom the creatures turn for their needs. He begets not, nor was He begotten, and there is none like Him."[193] So powerful is this simple premise that Muslims believe the greatest of all sins occurs when a person gives even the smallest share of Allah's exclusive and unique sovereignty to something else or to another body.[194]

Submission. This next assumption grows out of the overarching precept of one God—a God that the followers of Islam believe they should submit to. Daniel and Mahdi offer an excellent synopsis of this important belief:

> *Islam* itself means 'submission' to God and His will. The Koran emphasizes over and over the majesty of God, the beneficence that He has shown to human beings in particular, the acts of obedience and gratitude that creatures owe in return to their Creator, and the rewards that await the faithful at the end of time.[195]

As you will see later in this chapter, the main elements of submission are represented by a commitment to engage in and practice the Five Pillars of Islam.

Fatalism. So prevailing is their belief in the supremacy of God that most Muslims consider that events in life are predestined by the will of Allah. Perhaps the most repeated statement among committed Muslims is "if God wills it." Farah points out that "The sayings of the Prophet are replete with his insistence on God's role as preordainer and determiner of all that takes place."[196] For example, in the Koran you can read some of the following admonitions: "No soul can ever die except by Allah's leave and at a time appointed . . ."[197] "Thy God hath created and balanced all things, and hath fixed their destinies and guided them . . ."[198] This orientation of fatalism can also be seen in the saying "*in sha'a Allah*" (if God wills it). The word *inshalle* is also used with great frequency and translates as "God willing." These usages represent the Islamic theological concept that destiny unfolds according to God's will.

Judgment. One of the most important components of Islamic teaching centers on the notion of impending judgment. What this means is that there will be a day when all Muslims will stand before God and be judged. On that day a person's deeds will be

evaluated. As Halverson notes, "Those whose good deeds outweigh bad deeds will be rewarded in Paradise; and those whose bad deeds outweigh their good will be judged to hell. Whether one's good deeds outweigh one's bad deeds is a subjective manner, though, known only by God."[199] It appears that the key question in God's decision is, "Did the person recognize God alone and endeavor to live by Allah's commands [?]"[200] The Koran makes it very clear that merely professing Islam is not enough. In fact, some of the cruelest of all punishments in the afterlife fall on those who were hypocrites during their lives. We will have more to say about this idea of judgment later in the chapter, when we examine how Islam perceives death and the afterlife.

SUNNI AND SHIITE

Background. We agree with Corduan when he writes, "An understanding of the events that occurred right after Muhammad's death is crucial to an understanding of the contemporary Muslim world."[201] Those events serve as the source for one of the major divisions in the Islamic world—the division between Sunni and Shiites. While this momentous event was discussed in Chapter 2, we feel that the significance of this separation and of Muhammad's death is worth noting again.

> Muhammad died without announcing to the whole community of Muslims his choice of successor. The disagreement over what principle should be employed in naming a successor threatened to divide the community at once: within a short time, it led to the major division that continues until the present time with little signs of healing.[202]

What happened is that the Sunni Muslims wanted Muhammad's successor to be elected. The Shiites thought the heir should come through Muhammad's family line via "Muhammad's son-in-law."[203] The ramifications of this split contributed to major theological and physical clashes between the two groups that continue even today.

Similarities. While significant differences have endured since 632, Sunni and Shiites do have much in common. Daniel and Mahdi elaborate this point when they write, "They use the same text of the Koran, believe in the same notion of God, venerate the same prophet, perform the same number of daily prayers (albeit with minor differences in the ritual), pray in the same direction to the same God, fast the same number of days, etc."[204] They also share a common "ethnicity, language, cuisine and apparel."[205]

Differences. In spite of the similarities we have just mentioned, it is the schism between the two groups, which goes back almost fourteen centuries, that leads Ghosh to write, "The war between Iraq's Sunnis and Shiites has left the U.S.'s hopes of building a stable Iraq in ruins. Now it is threatening to spread throughout the Middle East and beyond."[206] We have already alluded to the basic core of the disagreement earlier in this section. Simply stated, the Shiites, who represent only 10 to 15 percent of all Muslims, "regard themselves as the most pious, holy and God-inspired members of the Prophet Muhammad's family."[207] Shiites also believe that most political power and spiritual authority should reside in their *imams* (religious leaders).[208] Sunni take an opposite position. That is, they have believed for centuries that when Muhammad died, his successor should have been elected. They are also

hold that less authority should be endowed on their leaders than do the Shiites. Matthews summarizes these two conflicting views toward leadership in the following manner: “The Shiites see the role of imam as spiritual; he is a moral, theological, and even mystical leader. Sunnis have been more pragmatic and regard leadership in Islam as a matter of majority rule, power, and practicality.”[209] To a non-Muslim, these two beliefs regarding descent and rule might seem superficial, but you must understand that for people who view their faith as a way of life, such distinctions are significant.

FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

We have already mentioned that although Muslims are dispersed throughout the world they share a strong sense of solidarity. They literally see themselves as a “family of believers.” One of the major unifying features of this “oneness” is the Five Pillars of Islam. The Pillars are the umbrella under which all Muslims stand. The Pillars are thought of as an “outline of specific patterns for worship as well as detailed prescriptions for social conduct, to bring remembrance of God into every aspect of daily life and practical ethics into the fabric of society.”[210] So definitive are the Pillars in a Muslim’s life that Caner and Caner point out, “The pillars are non-negotiable. They are not questioned, but believed to the utmost. To criticize the five pillars is, in fact, paramount to treason, perceived as heresy and blasphemy.”[211]

Because the Pillars are translated into action, it is important for students of intercultural communication to be aware of the content of these precepts. The Five Pillars of Islam are (1) statement of belief, (2) prayer, (3) alms, (4) fasting, and (5) pilgrimage. While *Jihad* is not one of the pillars of Islam, we will include a discussion of this important concept because of the controversy and confusion surrounding this word.

Statement of Belief ***(Shahadah).*** Repetition of the creed (*Shahadah*), often called the *Profession of Faith*, means uttering the following statement: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah.” This short sentence represents a condensed synopsis of Islamic fundamental beliefs. The first part of this pronouncement expresses the primary principle of monotheism, and the second element reinforces the Muslim trust in Muhammad, thus validating the Koran. These words, in Arabic, are heard everywhere Muslims practice their faith. They are also the first words a child hears after his or her birth and are repeated throughout his or her life.[212] These two sentences affirm the notion that the person accepts the idea of one God and that Muhammad was that God’s messenger to humanity.

Prayer ***(Salat).*** Prayer is a central ritual, performed five times a day—at dawn, at noon, in the mid-afternoon, after sunset, and before retiring—in response to a prayer call from the mosque. The prayer ritual is very structured, as is described by Nydell:

> Prayer is regulated by ritual washing beforehand and a predetermined number of prostrations and recitations, depending on the time of day. The prayer ritual includes standing [facing toward Mecca], bowing, touching the forehead to the floor (which is covered with a prayer mat, rug, or other clean surface), sitting back, and holding the hands in cupped position, all while reciting sacred verses. Muslims may pray in a mosque, in their home or office, or in public places.[213]

At noon on Friday, the Muslim day of rest called "Day of Assembly," communal prayers are conducted at mosques (houses of worship). Large numbers of male worshipers, side by side, pray and prostrate themselves. Farsoun offers an interesting commentary regarding the image of a countless number of people praying while in a facedown position. He notes, "This is often the only image of Muslims that is portrayed in the Western media. It is used to imply in a subtle manner the alien character of Islam."[214] According to tradition, the worshipper concludes each session by uttering a phrase known as the *taslim*: "Peace be upon you, the mercy and blessing of God."[215]

Almsgiving ***(Zakat).*** This pillar is predicated on the belief that "[c]ompassion toward weak and defenseless persons of the community is a reflection of the compassion of God."[216] Like so much of ritual, there are some deeper meanings imbedded in the act of almsgiving. Schneider and Silverman offer part of that importance when they write: "Consideration for the needy is part of Islam's traditional emphasis on equality. In the mosque, all are equal; there are no preferred pews for the rich or influential—all kneel together."[217] In addition, the almsgiver is figuratively God himself. Put in slightly different terms, "Whoever receives the alms is in theory benefiting not from the generosity of the immediate donor but from the mercy of God."[218]

Fasting ***(Sawm).*** Fasting is a tradition observed during the holy month of Ramadan, which is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. During this period, Muslims do not eat, drink, engage in sexual activity, or smoke between sunrise and sunset.[219] Exceptions are made for individuals in ill health and those who are traveling.[220] The act of fasting is believed to serve a number of purposes. First, it eliminates bodily impurities and initiates a new spiritual awakening. Second, as Nydell notes, "The purpose of fasting is to experience hunger and deprivation and to perform an act of self-discipline, humility, and faith."[221]

Ramadan is not only a religious experience for Muslims, but during the period there is "a great emphasis upon social and family ties."[222] Farsoun underscores this communal aspect of fasting: "In the evening after breaking the fast, Muslims socialize, discussing family, community, national and international affairs and reaffirming their values, customs and traditions."[223]

Pilgrimage ***(Hajj).*** The fifth pillar of Islam involves a pilgrimage to Mecca (in Saudi Arabia) that every Muslim, if financially able, is to make as evidence of his or her devotion to Allah. The trip involves a series of highly symbolic rituals designed to bring each Muslim closer to Allah. For example, the rituals begin "with the donning of the *ihram*, a white garment; this is a rite of ritual purification that symbolizes a turning away from worldly concerns."[224] Everyone wears the same color ihram in the belief that "This reduces rich and poor, young and old, as well as different nationalities, to the same unadorned status."[225] The pilgrims also circle the *Kabha* (a simple square stone building believed to have been built by Abraham, who struggled against idol worship) seven times.[226] This ritualistic act, much like the actions associated with all the other pillars of Islam, reaffirms the strong belief Muslims have in their religion. Caner and Caner speak of the power of these pillars when they note, "The five pillars act as a tapestry that gives Muslims a portrait of their task in life, a journey that they hope ends as it begins—as a newborn baby free from all sins."[227]

JIHAD

Jihad is, as Ilias points out, "one of the most misinterpreted concepts in Islam."[228] Part of the misinterpretation is self-induced by Islamic extremists when they employ the word as a rhetorical device to inflame the passions of their followers and to threaten their adversaries. The world has seen this confrontational use of the word on numerous occasions. For example, at one time the former Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat called for a "jihad to liberate Jerusalem."[229] Osama bin Laden used the word as a rallying cry to justify the September 11th attack on the United States. Even today, Iran's leaders and the opposition forces fighting in Afghanistan are invoking the notion of a *Jihad* against Israel and the United States. By linking *Jihad* to martyrdom, they create a powerful weapon. Another partial reason for the confusion surrounding the term can be traced to the lack of knowledge about Islam on the part of Westerners. Gordon speaks of these misinterpretations in the following manner: "*Jihad* is a complex term that has too often been reduced in the Western media and popular imagination to but one of its meanings, namely 'holy war,' the slogan of the modern radical Islamic movement."[230]

Part of the misunderstanding we have been discussing has plagued Islam for centuries. It seems that a reading of the Koran, and interpretations advanced by imams, reveals two meanings for the word, both of which are used by followers of the faith. One, *inner Jihad,* deals with the individual, and describes "the function of the individual who must strive constantly to live up to the requirements of the faith"[231] and battle "against his or her lesser nature."[232] The second interpretation of *Jihad* is often referred to an *outer Jihad*.

We begin with the inner *Jihad*, what Novak calls "the struggle with oneself."[233] A more detailed summary of this first interpretation is provided by Sheler: "Islamic scholars say Jihad—literally 'to struggle'—pertains first and foremost to mastering one's passions and leading a virtuous life."[234] What should be clear is that this first view of *Jihad* is concerned with "the battle all individuals wage against their own baser instincts."[235]

It is the second interpretation of the word *Jihad* that causes problems both in and out of the Islamic faith. This second meaning, according to Elias, "covers all activities that either defend Islam or else further its cause."[236] Hence, early wars that Muslims engaged in that brought new lands or peoples under Islam were known as *Jihad wars*. Muslims often suggest that these wars were similar to the Christian crusades. One of the most famous of these wars is discussed by Armstrong when she points out that Arabs, in the name of Islam, "waged a Jihad against their imperial masters the Ottoman, believing that Arabs, not Turks, should lead the Muslim peoples."[237] As we noted, even today some Arabs believe that when Muslim lands or the Islamic faith are in danger, "they are bound by Islamic tradition to wage a 'Jihad of the sword.'"[238] It is easy to see how this orientation contributes to a militant vision of the Islamic tradition. There are even extremists within the Islamic tradition who have tried to expand the Five Pillars to include a Sixth Pillar: a *Jihad*.[239] Regardless of the merits of this line of reasoning, it behooves you to understand the importance that *Jihad* carries in the Islamic tradition and to try to discover which of the two meanings is being employed when a person speaks about a *Jihad*.

CONSIDER THIS

The Islamic notion of Jihad *includes more than one interpretation. What are some of those interpretations?*

THE KORAN

For Muslims the Koran (often spelled *Qur'an*) is the most sacred of all texts. It is the "last revealed word of God" and "the primary source of every Muslim's faith and practice."[240] When Allah spoke to Muhammad, the prophet, writing in what is now classical Arabic, recorded the divine words in the Koran, the holy book of Islam. That Muhammad wrote the book in Arabic is one reason why Muslims "believe it cannot be translated into other languages."[241] Schimmel expands on this point and the importance of the Koran to the followers of Islam:

> According to Islamic doctrine, the style of the Koran is inimitable and of superhuman beauty and power. Not only does the text contain solutions for all problems that arrive in the world, but there are also unknown Divine mysteries hidden in the sequence of its verses and in the arrangement of every letter.[242]

Unlike the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament, the Koran has very little narrative. Its 114 chapters (often called *surahs)* contain the "wisdom" that Muhammad proclaimed during his life. For Muslims, these are the words of God. This makes the Koran a manual on how to live, since it treats topics ranging from how to lead a holy life to proper conduct of social and economic matters. The reason the Koran offers counsel in both spiritual and practical topics is that like so much of Islam, the Koran does not distinguish between religious, social, and political life. Hence, it is turned to and quoted for advice and counsel about weddings, funerals, holidays, child-rearing practices, and countless other topics both general and specific. The eclectic nature of the Koran has encouraged some observers to suggest that the Koran is the most memorized book in the world. Ilias notes, "To this day there is great prestige in memorizing the text, and one who knows it in its entirety is called *hafiz* (literally 'guardian')."[243]

In summary, for Muslims, Allah has spoken completely in the Koran, and will not speak again. Hence the book, says Wilson, is "seen as a perfect revelation from God, a faithful reproduction of an original engraved on a tablet in heaven which has existed for all eternity."[244]

Before we conclude our discussion of the Koran, we should briefly mention one additional religious text that helps shape the perceptions and behaviors of many Muslims—the *Hadith*. This book attempts to chronicle the life, actions, deeds, and sayings of Muhammad. Containing a series of stories, the text was originally passed down from generation to generation. The Hadith contains depictions of events in Muhammad's life and speaks to issues of ethics and living.[245] Many see the book as an extension of Muhammad's "commandments." It is important to remember that these writings do not carry the mark or word of God, but are only the narratives of the early scholars who were fashioning a new religion. Because of this, particularly with regard to the *Hadith*, vastly different interpretations of what Mohammad intended have evolved. As Sacirbey notes, "For centuries, Muslims have hotly debated the hadith, often coming to vastly different conclusions about what lessons to draw from Muhammad's life."[246] You can see the results of those debates as many extremists and fundamentalists cite "certain sayings to justify violence, intolerance, and the oppression of women."[247] In short, as the issue of historical accuracy swells around the Hadith, political figures and religious leaders continue to translate the text in a manner that supports their specific agendas.

CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS

A Complete Way of Life. The most profound and significant cultural manifestation of Islam is how it is a complete way of life. It must be remembered that Muhammad, who was Allah's messenger, was both a political and a religious prophet. In Islam, religion and social membership are therefore inseparable. Islam instructs people as to the best way to carry out their lives in private, social, economic, ethical, political, and spiritual arenas. As Richter and his colleagues note, "Islamic law makes no distinction between religion and society, but governs all affairs, public and private."[248] Nydell further develops this idea in the following manner: "An Arab's religion affects his or her whole way of life on a daily basis. Religion is taught in schools, the language is full of religious expressions, and people practice their religion openly, almost obtrusively, expressing it in numerous ways.[249] Simply put, Islam is "a total way of life, pervading every aspect of a believer's day to day behavior in the narrow sense."[250] Viewed from this perspective, Islam is a codification of all values and ways to behave in every circumstance, from child rearing to eating, to preparing for bed, to the treatment of homosexuals, to views toward modesty.[251]

The channeling of most behavior through religion can be seen in the interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims. For example, Angrosino points out, "The Islamic revolution in Iran is perhaps the most conspicuous example of religion as a political force in the modern world. It is, indeed, the prototype of the 'political Islam' (sometimes referred to as 'fundamentalist Islam') that has become such a major force in our own time."[252] The same link between Islam and nonreligious activity is manifested in the manner in which some Muslims perceive the business arena. For example, because Muslims are forbidden by Islamic law to charge interest on loans, banking practices can be problematic when Westerners attempt to do business in Islamic countries.[253]

Like so many worldviews that are a complete way of life, Islam is taught from infancy. You will recall that we mentioned that the first words chanted in the ear of a Muslim infant are "*La ilaha illa 'llah*" (There is no god but God). Lutfiyya summarizes Islam as a religion that stresses "(1) a feeling of dependency on God; (2) the fear of God's punishment on earth as well as the hereafter; and (3) a deep-seated respect for tradition and for the past."[254] This sort of all-inclusive religious orientation provides its members with "an immense body of requirements and prohibitions concerning religion, personal morality, social conduct, and political behavior. Business and marital relations, criminal law, ritual practices, and much more were covered in this vast system. "[255]

Gender. The topic of gender differences, as it applies to Islam, is a difficult one to examine for a number of reasons. "First, we as Westerners are examining this subject as "outsiders" and, therefore, must be wary of applying Western models to the Islamic culture's perception and treatment of women." While most Americans might find it strange for an entire group of women to cover their hair with the *hijab*, Muslim women might have a hard time understanding why so many women in the United States dye their hair. Second, broad generalizations regarding gender often overlook regional differences. For example, a village woman of rural Afghanistan is very different from a well-educated Palestinian who is socially and politically

CONSIDER THIS

What is meant by the phrase "Islam is a complete way of life"?

active. Within Iraq, women are now taking a role in the new National Assembly, and women in Kuwait recently were granted voting rights.[256] Women have held high governmental positions and even been heads of state in places such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Turkey.[257] Nydell develops this important idea about regional differences and how they have affected Arab society: "The degree to which women have been integrated into the workforce and circulate freely in public varies among the Arab countries. In Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Iraq, educated women have been active at all levels of society."[258]

In spite of the examples we just cited, we agree with Gordon when he notes, "The role of women in Islamic society is a hotly debated topic both within and outside the Islamic world."[259] Contributing to the debate is the fact that the Koran and other religious teachings offer a variety of interpretations on the subject of women. For instance, some Islamic scholars point to the Koran to demonstrate that women must give their consent in marriage, are included in inheritance, and even note that the Koran "teach[es] that men and women have equal religious rights and responsibilities."[260] However, many believe that the Koran, and the teachings of *imams*, who serve as interpreters of the law and traditions, take a very different view regarding the perception and treatment of women. They point to numerous verses in the Koran that make it apparent that "men are clearly depicted as superior to women."[261] Sedgwick summaries that restricted view of women when he writes, "Islam takes it as axiomatic that men are stronger than women, not only physically but also mentally and morally, and that women are therefore in need of male protection and guidance."[262] Signs of this viewpoint flourish within the Muslim faith. For example, according to Islamic tradition, women cannot teach men, "so Muslim women who have trained in the ways of the Koran teach only girls and other women."[263] In most countries, "Islam encourages women to pray at home" instead of at the mosques with the men."[264] Even outside the religious context there is, at least by Western standards, a great discrepancy between the accepted behavior of men and women. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission noted that few Arab countries permit women to vote and that women hold less than 5 percent of the government or parliament seats in their countries.[265]

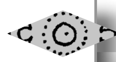
The way Muslim women dress, and the rationale for that dress, is yet another cultural statement about the role of gender in Islamic culture. You have most likely seen Arab women wearing the *hijab* to cover their heads, and *caftans* and *abayas* as outer garments that conceal nearly all of their skin. The reason for this modesty is found in the Koran, which instructs women to "cover their adornments" and to "draw their veils over their bosoms."[266] They are also called upon "to be modest in public and conceal their charms from all but their own men."[267] This attitude is expressed today with the following proverb: "A woman is like a jewel: You don't expose it to thieves."

We need to mention once again that when evaluating gender differences, it is important to keep the host culture in mind and not let ethnocentrism color your evaluation. Elias makes the same point when he writes, "Despite the egalitarian social structure that dominates the majority of Islamic societies, women from all backgrounds usually embrace rather than reject their religious tradition."[268] Second, worldwide attitudes regarding gender roles are constantly in a state of flux—particularly as they apply to Islamic women. For instance, a 2007 report disclosed that Saudi Arabian society was deeply immersed in a debate over whether to grant women the right to drive.[269] And in the United States highly modest swimsuits now are being sold so that Muslim women there can enjoy the beach.[270] While these changes seem minor, they do reflect, at least in the United States, a view that many "[m]ore Muslim women are joining the debate on gender issues."[271]

Art and Architecture. An important part of Islamic culture is its distinctive art and architecture. Muslim countries, as Crim notes, are "rich in painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts."[272] Through the use of brilliant colors and distinctive geometric patterns and shapes, Islamic art creates a vivid and instantaneous impact. Part of the special quality of Islamic art is its calligraphy. Calligraphy has always been thought of by Muslims as the most splendid form of art because of its relation to the Koran.[273] In fact, much of the calligraphy contains phrases and saying from the Koran.

The artistic magnificence of Arab art is, like nearly all aspects of Islam, directly connected to Islamic religion. The Koran, for example, "teaches that an object and its image are united."[274] This would, in part, help explain why so little Arab art is representational rather than illustrative. By this we mean that in most Arab art forms the emphasis is on shapes, form, design, style, and calligraphy—not people, landscapes, or other representations of reality. In most strict Islamic homes, displaying photographs is prohibited. Whereas the Roman Catholic tradition has made wide use of depictions of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and saints, Islam disallows the use of religious images of any kind. Peoples and Bailey explain this tradition:

> The Koran prohibits the use of human images, which are viewed as idolatry. Thus many Islamic people extend this to include any pictorial representation of humans or animals. As a result, much of the art of Islamic peoples is devoid of naturalistic representations, focusing instead on elaborate geometric or curvilinear designs.[275]

IMAGINE THIS 

The Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten *included twelve editorial cartoons in its publication—all of which were caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad. Soon after publication of the cartoons, which were reprinted in over fifty countries, outrage and even violence spread throughout the Muslim world. Danish embassies in Syria, Lebanon, Iran, and Indonesia were threatened and many were set on fire. In Gaza City the flags of Denmark, Norway, Germany, and other countries were set on fire. There were even death threats made against the cartoonist and any editor that continued to display the cartoons. All of this behavior would not have been possible without some deep-seated religious beliefs about the depiction of Muhammad in a cartoon.*

What are those beliefs?

For centuries, Islamic architecture has been recognized as providing some of the most magnificent examples of human creativity. In fact, the earliest architectural testament of Islam, the Dome of the Rock, constructed in Jerusalem by the Muslim ruler Abd el-Malik around 690, is considered an architectural marvel even by today's standards. Scattered throughout the world are mosques that reflect the special style, colors, building materials, and the like that clearly mark Islamic architecture as striking, distinctive, and beautiful.

NOTIONS ABOUT DEATH

The idea of death and an afterlife are crucial elements of the Islamic religion. During the last decade, due to the prominence of suicide bombers, the Western world has become very interested in how the followers of Islam view death and an afterlife. Part of the curiosity is

trying to understand the motivation behind bombings that take the lives of women and children as well as that of the bomber. Looking at the concepts of the "final judgment" and the afterlife offers some clues to this complex question. According to Islamic teaching, as Kramer points out, on the Day of Judgment, "The dead will rise from their graves amidst cataclysmic events which will disrupt the natural order. They will be judged according to the number of good and bad entries that have been recorded into a set of heavenly books by secretary angels whose duty it is to record all human deeds."[276] With slight variations, Muslims, like Jews and Christians, believe that the day of judgment (the Day of Resurrection) is when all people will be resurrected for God's judgment according to their beliefs and deeds. "Islam says that what we experience in the afterlife is a revealing of our tendencies in this life. Our thoughts, actions, and moral qualities are turned into our outer reality."[277] The notion of a moral code, and its tie to an afterlife, is one of the most fundamental and crucial elements of Islamic doctrine. Elias writes, "Judgment, reward, and punishment are central points in Islam and are the foundation upon which its entire system of ethics is based."[278] The result of Allah's judgment determines whether each person will be sent to heaven or hell. The Islamic teaching makes it very clear that these two places are poles apart. However, for many Muslims, their chances of going to heaven are greatly increased if one of their deeds involves taking their own life while killing "God's enemies." With heaven being a far better option than hell, the suicide bomber perceives that carrying out the deadly mission would increase chances of getting into heaven. Smith offers an excellent summary of the depictions of heaven and hell in the Koran—portrayals that contribute to a suicide bomber's decision to seek martyrdom:

> Depending on how it fares in the accounting, the soul will then repair to Heaven or Hell. In the Koran these conditions are described with all the vividness of Eastern imagery. Heaven abounds in deep rivers of cool, crystal water, lush fruit and vegetation, boundless fertility, and beautiful mansions with gracious attendants. Hell's portrayal is at times equally graphic with its account of molten metal, boiling liquids, and the fire that splits everything to pieces. [279]

While many Muslim scholars point out that these two descriptions are only metaphors for an afterlife, the two depictions nevertheless underscore the importance of good and evil, and the consequences of each, in Islamic teaching. We should also note that there is debate among Muslim *imams* and scholars on the issues of suicide bombers, martyrdom, and Heaven. Some see the actions of these bombers as an extension of a *Jihad* against the enemies of Islam, while others maintain that the Koran does not approve of the killing of innocent people. Regardless of the authenticity of both positions, one thing seems certain: those who become suicide bombers, and engage in this horrific and gruesome act, do so because they believe their actions will be rewarded in heaven.

Hinduism

Hinduism, with almost a billion followers, is the world's oldest known religion. There is a myth that Hindus are found only in India, but while about 80 per cent of the Indian population is Hindu,[280] members of this religion are spread throughout the world. In fact, there are over 1.5 million Hindus practicing their religion in the United States.[281] In spite of its many followers and long history, Hinduism remains the most difficult of

all religious orientations for Westerners to understand. As Scarborough notes, “Defying straightforward explanations of Westerners, it is neither a creed nor an institution, and it includes a vast array of beliefs and deities.”[282] Some of the reasons for the differences between Western views and Hinduism are mentioned by Narayanan: “Hinduism is somewhat difficult to define. The religion has no single founder, creed, teacher, or prophet acknowledged by all Hindus as central to the religion, and no single holy book is universally acclaimed as being of primary importance.”[283] Boorstin buttresses this view when he writes:

> Western religions begin with a notion that One—One God, One Book, One Son, One Church, One Nation under God—is better than many. The Hindu, dazzled by the wondrous variety of the creation, could not see it that way. For so multiplex a world, the more gods the better! How could any one god account for so varied a creation?[284]

As you can see, this thing called Hinduism is difficult to pin down. As Smart points out, “Even to talk of a single something called Hinduism can be misleading, because of the great variety of customs, form of worship, gods, myths, philosophies, types of rituals, movements, and styles of art and music contained loosely within the bounds of a single religion.”[285] Further, “Movements, deities, shrines, and temples rise or fall on their own merits and according to how their believers support them. Patrons control their own temples and define what is considered proper.”[286] What you are beginning to observe is that “Rather than *a* religion, Hinduism is more accurately described as a long-term accumulation synthesis of a number of religious viewpoints into a commonly accepted system of complementary means of salvation.”[287] Notice the words “commonly accepted” in the last sentence, because “despite the diversity, there is a general Hindu worldview.”[288] Let us now examine that worldview so you will better appreciate how people who hold this view perceive how the world operates and their place in that world.

ORIGINS

Providing an accurate history of the development of Hinduism is difficult. First, Hinduism had its beginnings long before people were employing written records. Second, the lack of a single founder and text makes it problematic to point to a specific chronology. Yet most historical theories trace the origins of Hinduism back to a time almost four thousand years ago when a group of light-skinned Aryan Indo-European tribes invaded what is now northern India.[289] As these Aryans moved into the Indus Valley, “they mixed with native peoples, they shared customs, traditions, rites, symbols, and myths.”[290] What was unique about this blending is that each group contributed to it and received points of view from it.[291] As you can observe, the origins of Hinduism history were “marked not by remarkable personalities (although there must have been many) and great proselytizing movements, but rather by the composition of orally transmitted sacred texts expressing central concepts of what we now call Hinduism.”[292] Because of the message contained in these texts, and their significance to Hinduism, we now pause and examine a few of them.

SACRED TEXTS

Earlier we mentioned that in Hinduism there was not a single text such as the Bible or the Koran. This does not mean, however, that Hinduism is without any holy books.

The oldest and in some ways most fundamental scriptures are the *Vedas*. "The *Vedas*, literally meaning 'knowledge,' are the records of religious knowledge as it developed over centuries."[293] The Vedas are actually "four collections of ritual materials."[294] So important are these four books that Richter and his associates have noted that "in the difficult process of defining 'Hinduism,' one possible point to note is the acceptance of the *Vedas*."[295] The Vedas "transmit the ancient revelations in a series of hymns, ritual texts, and speculations composed over a period of a millennium beginning ca. 1400 B.C."[296] These four books, with their philosophical maxims and spiritual guidance, remain the most important "authority" for Hinduism.

Another important group of texts is the *Upanishads*, a highly metaphysical body of work written in Sanskrit between 800 and 400 B.C. In some ways, they are a further development of the Vedas and are often referred to as the end of the Vedas. "The *Upanishads* teach the knowledge of God and record the spiritual experiences of the sages of ancient India."[297] Prabhavananda and Manchester make the same point with the following description: "The literal meaning of *Upanishad*, 'sitting near devotedly,' brings picturesquely to mind an earnest disciple learning from his teacher."[298]

Written around 540 to 300 B.C., the *Bhagavad-Gita* is a lengthy poem of dialogue between a warrior, Prince Arjuna, and the god Lord Krishna.[299] This eighteen-chapter book "teaches how to achieve union with the supreme Reality through the paths of knowledge, devotion, selfless work, and meditation."[300] One of the most important characteristics of the text is that it reinforces the very core of Hinduism: that God is an exalted, inspiring, and sublime force within us. Because God is within us, say the Hindus, we can rise above our mortal limitations and be liberated. The Bhagavad-Gita also speaks of three courses you can follow to accomplish this liberation. Shattuck offers a summary of those paths: In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna outlines three paths that lead to liberation: (1) the discipline of knowledge, *jnana-yoga*, (2) the discipline of action, *karma-yoga*, and (3) the discipline of devotion, *bhakti-yoga*.[301]

CORE ASSUMPTIONS

As is the case with all religions, the messages and lessons advanced by the sacred texts, teachers, and prophets of Hinduism are numerous and beyond the scope and purpose of this chapter. However, Hinduism does contain some central teachings that you will find useful when interacting with someone who is a Hindu.

Divine in Everything. In many respects, Hinduism is a conglomeration of religious thought, values, and beliefs. Not only is there not a single founder, it also does not have an organizational hierarchy, such as that of the Catholic Church. Among the Hindus, one may find magic, nature worship, animal veneration, and an unlimited number of deities. Matlines and Magida summarize this worldview by pointing out that Hinduism "teaches that God is within each being and object in the universe and transcends every being and object, that the essence of each soul is divine, and that the purpose of life is to become aware of that divine essence."[302] Narayanan further develops the issue of the divine when he writes, "The belief that the divine is not only beyond gender and name, but also beyond number, has resulted in its manifestation in many shapes and forms: as human or animal, as trees, or as combinations of these beings."[303] This view of a vast number of deities makes Hindus among the most religious people in the world because they find the divine in everything. As Boorstin notes, "The Hindu is dazzled by a vision of the holy, not merely holy people but places like the Himalayan peaks where the gods

live, or the Ganges which flows from Heaven to Earth, or countless inconspicuous sites where gods or goddesses or unsung heroes showed their divine mettle."[304]

Ultimate Reality. Hinduism is based on the fundamental assumption that the material world, the one we can touch and see, is not the only reality. Instead, they hold that there are other realities that lead to spiritual advancement, and reveal the true nature of life, the mind, and the spirit. The Hindu view is that "What we see as reality is the merest illusion, a game, a dream, or a dance."[305] Hindus are not satisfied with what they see or hear, as reflected in the Hindu saying, "Him the eye does not see, nor the tongue express, nor the mind grasp." Guidance for such an orientation even comes from the Bhagavad-Gita in the following advice: "A man of faith, intent on wisdom, His senses restrained, will wisdom win."[306]

Hindus believe that finding satisfaction in the material and physical world (the Western notion of reality) might gratify you temporarily, but eventually the satisfaction of that world will "wear out." To experience true happiness, bliss, or liberation (what the Hindus call *nirvana*), one needs to discover the spiritual existence found outside traditional concepts of reality. Kumar and Sethi summarize: "The normative implication of this principle is that individuals should strive to unite their inner self with the ultimate reality. The attempt to realize this unity constitutes the heart of spiritualism in the Indian subcontinent."[307]

Brahman. The notion of *Brahman* is actually an extension of our last paragraph, because "Brahman is the absolute or ultimate reality in Hinduism."[308] According to Smart, this definitive reality is seen as "the sacred Power which is both the sacrificial process and in the cosmos."[309] It is a special knowledge about "the truth of things" that allows someone to be enlightened. As Usha notes, Brahman is the "all-pervading transcendental Reality."[310] Jain and Kussman offer a summary of this important concept: "Brahman is the ultimate level of reality, a philosophical absolute, serenely blissful, beyond all ethical or metaphysical limitations. The basic Hindu view of God involves infinite being, infinite consciousness and infinite bliss."[311]

Discovery of Self. One of the core components of Hinduism deals with self-delusion regarding the true nature of life. As Hammer notes, Hinduism begins with the premise that "the ultimate cause of suffering is people's ignorance of their true nature, the Self, which is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, perfect, and eternal."[312] The Upanishads, one of the sacred texts we discussed earlier, speak of the self in the following poem: "Know this: The Self is the owner of the chariot, The chariot is the body, Soul (*buddhi*) is the (body's) charioteer, Mind the reins (that curb it)."[313]

To help one discover "the Self," Hinduism offers its followers some specific recommendations, an examination of which can provide non-Hindus with insight into this worldview. First, intellect is subordinate to intuition. Truth does not come to the individual; it already resides within each of us. The same point is made in the Bhagavad-Gita: "Meditation excels knowledge." The reason for meditation is that it clears your mind of all external thoughts and allows you to discover your true self. Hindus hold that you cannot be told about God; you must experience God from the inside. Hence, outward expression is secondary to inward realization. Second, the world is an illusion because nothing is permanent. All of nature, including humankind, is in an unending cycle of birth, death, and rebirth or reincarnation. Third, it is possible for the human to break the cycle of birth, death, and reincarnation and experience an internal state of

CONSIDER THIS

What do Hindus mean when they say "truth does not come to the individual; it already resides within each of us"?

bliss and joy called *nirvana*. For Hindus, nirvana is also a type of emancipation from all suffering within the human condition. One achieves nirvana by leading a good life and thus achieving higher spiritual status in the next life. Holding materialism in abeyance and practicing introspection and meditation can advance this spiritual status. The path toward nirvana is also influenced by one's *karma*, an ethical standard that asserts, "Every act we make and every desire we have shapes our future experiences and influences the path toward Nirvana."[314] As Jain and Kussman point out, "The present condition of each individual life is a product of what one did in the previous life, and one's present acts, thoughts, and decisions determine one's future states."[315]

Multiple Paths. One of the enduring qualities of Hinduism has been its ability to offer various paths and to adapt to diverse needs. As Swami Prabhavananda noted, "God can be realized in many ways,"[316] which refers to the famous Hindu expression that states "Truth is one, but sages call it by various names."[317] McGuire offers an explanation of the eclectic nature of Hinduism in the following paragraph:

> Indeed, Hinduism is a way of life that encourages acceptance of multiple representations of deity, multiple religious functionaries and multiple authorities, multiple understandings of duty and proper devotion, multiple allegiances to autonomous congregations, and multiple (and changeable) devotional practices and holy places.[318]

Because of this multiple-paths approach to Hinduism, it has been called a "religion which offers many beliefs and practices to all comers."[319] This all-inclusive orientation has been responsible for Hinduism's popularity even outside of India.

CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS

Complete Way of Life. As is the case with so many religions, Hinduism pervades every part of a person's life. This is because the early stages of Hinduism saw a mixing of cultures and of gods.[320] This mixing of religious ideas and civilizations created a worldview that was as much a social system as it was a religious orientation.[321] Even today Hinduism is often referred to as a complete way of life. Radhakrishnan, a former Oxford don and second president of India, observed, "Hinduism is more a culture than a creed."[322] This creed "forms the basis of a social system, and thereby governs the types of modalities of interaction even in contemporary society."[323] In this sense, as Venkateswaran points out, "Hinduism is not merely a religion. It encompasses an entire civilization and a way of life, whose roots date back prior to 3000 B.C.E."[324] As Narayana notes, "The boundaries between the sacred and non-sacred spheres do not apply to the Hindu traditions."[325]

As a complete way of life, Hinduism shows itself in a host of ways. For example, people engage in a large assortment of rites and festivals. In addition, while temples are a popular place for worship, it is the daily activity in the home that most reflects Hindu practices as an important and integral part of life. Henderson indicates the significance

of the home in the following explanation: "Hinduism wears the face of family and home. A home's most sacred spot is its hearth. Most rituals occur amid daily life. The acts of bathing, dressing, and eating are connected to ritual purity."[326]

CONSIDER THIS

Below is a list of some the issues that all worldviews and religious traditions deal with. Think about your own worldview and religious tradition as you examine the list. Compare your answers to those of two other traditions.

a. Which are supreme, the laws of God or the laws of nature?

b. Is unhappiness an accepted part of life?

c. Is there an afterlife?

d. What is the role of fate in life? What is the role of free will?

e. Are women superior to men?

f. Is one's station in life determined by birth?

g. What is evil? How should evil people be treated?

Dharma. The concept of *dharma*, because of its influences on how people live and treat each other, represents an important concept of Hinduism. As DeGenova points out, "Dharma, perhaps the most influential concept in Indian culture and society, refers to actions characterized by consideration of righteousness and duty."[327] The acting out of the duty that DeGenova mentions is yet another cultural manifestation of being Hindu. "Dharma is the cementer and sustainer of social life. The rules of Dharma have been laid down for regulating the worldly affairs of men."[328] The ordering of dharma activity is so specific that, among other things, it provides people guidance on how to behave, perform their vocational obligations, act during various life cycles, and even how old people should treat those younger than them.[329]

Dharma pertains to both religious and communal responsibilities. So powerful is dharma to Hindus that many believe it is the main pattern underlying the cosmos and is reflected in both the "ethical and social laws of humankind."[330] An extension of the belief and command of dharma is the idea that if you go against dharma, which is seen as a cosmic norm, you will be producing bad karma. Because karma affects this life and subsequent lives (through reincarnation), most Hindus seek to live a virtuous life and follow their dharma.

Four Stages of Life. Another way in which Hinduism operates is seen in what are called "The Four Stages of Life." The four stages represent phases the individual must pass through as a means of gathering enough knowledge to become "free" and "spiritual." Kumar and Sethi point out that people have "specific responsibilities associated with each of these phases, and it is their duty to fulfill them."[331] Before we mention the four stages, we should point out that very few people make it past stages one and two, since the last two stages make enormous demands on the individual. In abbreviated form, the stages are (1) *student* (studies the Vedas while serving an apprenticeship with a teacher), (2) *householder* (gets married and tries to live a highly spiritual and ethical life), (3) *forest dweller* (this orientation is away from home and demands intensive studies and meditation), and (4) *ascetic*, an optional state when the Hindu is completely independent from all people and possessions and unites with Brahman.[332]

In many religious traditions, meditation is employed to clear the mind of all external thoughts and to allow practitioners to discover their true selves.

Gary Conner/PhotoEdit

NOTIONS ABOUT DEATH

The core of a Hindu's conviction regarding death is summarized by Narayanan in one short statement: "Hindus believe in the immortality of the soul and in reincarnation."[333] What this means is that even though the physical body dies, a person's soul does not have a beginning or an end but simply passes into another reincarnation at the end of this life.[334] This general view about life and death grows out of a number of assumptions that are explained in the Upanishads. Let us examine some of these notions, because they offer valuable insight into how Hindus perceive the world. First, the Upanishads hold that since death is inevitable it should not be the cause of extended sorrow. Second, the true dimension of the individual does not actually die but rather takes on a new body. The reason for this Hindu belief is that "the Eternal Self (*atman)* is birthless and deathless, and cannot be destroyed."[335] Third, if a person is ever able to experience the Eternal Self in a particular lifetime because of good karma, there will be no need to be reborn since he or she will have realized Brahman (the absolute and supreme reality).

As already noted, Hinduism teaches that when the physical dimension of the person dies, his or her soul is released from "the body as if the body were a worn-out robe."[336] Therefore, in most instances people are cremated in a robe—and as quickly after death

as possible. In India, the ashes of the deceased person are taken by his or her relatives and scattered into a holy river such as the Ganges.

Buddhism

A fifth major religious tradition that can influence intercultural communication is Buddhism. Although the followers of Buddhism are small in number (about 400 million) when compared to that of Christianity, Islam, or Hinduism, Buddhism's impact on civilization has been profound. As de Bary points out, "By extending itself over so many cultural areas in South and East Asia, Buddhism has established a greater universality than any other religion in that part of the world."[337] Buddhism has also spread well beyond Asia. As the followers of Buddhism moved to places like Europe and the United States, they brought their religion and adapted it to each new cultural setting. Markham confirms this idea when he writes, "Buddhism has proved to be very adaptable. It grew rapidly, developing significant forms for different cultures."[338] In spite of its recognition as a major religious tradition, many Westerners find it difficult to understand Buddhism. Thera, quoting the philosopher T. H. Huxley, mentions some of the reasons Westerners are bewildered by Buddha's ideas:

> Buddhism is a system which knows no God in the Western sense, which denies a soul to man, which counts the belief in immortality a blunder, which refuses any efficacy to prayer and sacrifice, which bids men look to nothing but their own efforts for salvation.[339]

ORIGINS

While it is true that Western religions and Buddhism present very different ways of seeing the world, both share a profound core belief in the power and influence of a single individual. For Christians, Jesus is to whom people turn for personal guidance and a means of understanding the place of humans in the world. In Buddhism, as Armstrong points out, it is the Buddha that has for millions of human beings been "the person who has epitomized the human situation."[340] Because Buddha had an influence on the world long before Muhammad and Jesus, we begin our exploration of this religion by examining the life of this extraordinary man.

Buddhism was founded by an Indian prince named Siddhartha Gautama in about 563 B.C. The story of how he became known as the Enlightened One has three essential features. First, it is important to note that Prince Siddhartha was born into great luxury. His father was a king who had numerous mansions. As Siddhartha himself wrote, "I wore garments of silk and my attendants held a white umbrella over me."[341] Second, in spite of all his lavish surroundings, the prince felt a deep discontentment with his life. Garfinkel offers an account of what was to become a major event in the founding of Buddhism:

> At age 29 the married prince, disillusioned with his opulence, ventured out of his palace and for the first time encountered old age, sickness, and death. So moved was he by this brush with the painful realities of life that he left his comfortable home to search for an end to human suffering.[342]

For the next six years, often called The Period of Enquiry, the Prince engaged in deep meditation and lived an austere life as he searched for answers to explain

the suffering he saw and find a means of alleviating that suffering. After examining his thoughts during this period, he emerged from his self-imposed seclusion and became Buddha. As Clark notes, "Siddhartha became a Buddha (Enlightened One) in a flash of insight one day while meditating. He immediately gathered his disciples and began to teach them what he had learned."[343] This Great Renunciation produced an emotion within Siddhartha that some say formed one of the elements of Buddhism. According to Robinson, Johnson, and Thanissaro, the emotion was the feeling of complete calm and "sense of serene confidence (*prasada*) the prince experienced when he discovered there was a way to overcome the suffering of life."[344]

The third and final feature of the story of Buddha focuses on how he spent his life after his personal revelation. Until his death at 80, Buddha traveled up and down the Ganges Valley sharing his insights with anyone who would listen. After his death, his message was carried by his students. Around 230 B.C., Buddhist missionaries were sent into Sri Lanka (previously called Ceylon).[345] Over the next six or seven hundred years, Buddhism spread across Southeast Asia, China, and Korea. By the time it reached Japan in the sixth century, Buddhism was firmly established across most of what we now call Asia.[346]

CORE ASSUMPTIONS

As is the case with Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, there are multiple forms of Buddhism (such as Theravada, Mahayana, Zen, Pure Land, Vajrayana, and Tibetan Buddhism). What happened is that each culture and country adapted their existing belief system to what Buddha offered. In spite of some minor differences, all the major schools of Buddhism share the same basic assumptions. Let us look at some of those assumptions.

First, Buddha made it clear that he was not a god but simply a man who became enlightened. While he could in some ways be perceived as a savior, his influence was not that of a supreme being in the traditional sense. As de Bary points out, Buddha's "powers are understood quite differently from the Judeo-Christian conception of God the Messiah, and attributes of the latter as Creator, Judge, Redeemer of chosen people, Father, Son, etc., are largely absent in Buddha."[347] When Buddha was asked if he was God, the answer he offered his followers demonstrates the importance of this crucial concept to the practice of Buddhism:

> "Are you a god?" they asked.
> "No."
> "An angel?"
> "No."
> "A saint?"
> "No."
> "Then what are you?"
> Buddha answered,
> "I am awake."[348]

That simple response, "I am awake," tells all those who seek Buddha that the answer to life can be found in the simple act of "waking up" and becoming aware of the truths that accompany being enlightened.[349]

Second, Buddha taught that all individuals have the potential to seek the truth on their own. As Rahula notes, "He taught, encouraged, and stimulated each person to develop himself and to work out emancipation, for he has the power to liberate himself from all bondage through his own personal effort and intelligence."[350] Fisher and Luyster express this key concept in the following manner: "In its traditional form, it holds that our salvation from suffering lies only in our own efforts. The Buddha taught us that only in understanding how we create suffering for ourselves can we become free."[351] It is often difficult for Westerners to understand this orientation since many Western religions stress community and direction from the clergy. Buddhism, on the contrary, challenges individuals to do their own religious seeking. A famous Buddhist saying is "Be lamps unto yourselves." This emphasis on self-reliance is explained by the Buddhist teacher Bhikkhu Bodki when he writes, "For the Buddha, the key to liberation is mental purity and correct understanding, and for this reason he rejects the notion that we gain salvation by learning from an external source."[352] The words "external source" represent the essential message in Buddha's teaching, as you can observe in two celebrated Buddhist maxims that stress the same point: "Betake yourself to no external refuge. Work out your own salvation with diligence," and "You are your own refuge; there is no other refuge."[353] Bodhi explains this core assumption in the following manner:

> The Buddha rests his teaching upon the thesis that with the right method man can change and transform himself. He is not doomed to be forever burdened by the weight of his accumulated tendencies, but through his own effort he can cast off all these tendencies and attain a condition of complete purity and freedom.[354]

Finally, in Buddhism we see a worldview more concerned with humanism and the art of living daily life than with supernatural authority or even metaphysical conjectures. Buddha made no cosmic speculations about heaven and hell, death, or how the world was created. Instead he offered his followers a way to understand and cope with their present existence.

The Four Noble Truths. Much of Buddha's message can be found in the Four Noble Truths. Scholars maintain that from these Truths "we get a fairly good and accurate account of the essential teaching of the Buddha."[355] What is interesting about these Truths is that regardless of the type of Buddhism you select, the Four Noble Truths represent the "core of belief and practice to which all Buddhists adhere."[356] Definitions of what constitutes the Truths range from simple recipes for understanding what is wrong with the world to explanations of how it works.[357] Regardless of your interpretation of the Noble Truths, they "stand as the axioms of his (Buddha's) system, the postulates from which the rest of his teachings logically derive."[358] It is important to keep in mind that while the Four Noble Truths, and the discussion of the Eightfold Path that follows, are treated as separate categories, they are interrelated in that each flows seamlessly into the other.

The First Noble Truth (*dukkha*) is that life is "suffering." As Buddha said in his early writings: "Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, worry, misery, pain, distress, and despair are suffering; not attaining what one desires is suffering."[359] The notion of suffering is not as narrow as the word would suggest. For example, "It includes not only acute or manifest states of mental or physical suffering, but also any degree

of unpleasantness, discomfort, dissatisfaction, anxiety, or unease."[360] The rationale for Buddha's assertion that life is suffering is explained by Bodhi:

> The reason all worldly conditions are said to be *dukkha*, inadequate and unsatisfactory, is because they are all impermanent and unstable; because they lack any substantial or immutable self; and because they cannot give us lasting happiness; secure against change and loss.[361]

The teachers of Buddhism would point out that if your life is not characterized by some degree of suffering, you only need look at the world to see the suffering of others. Contrary to Western interpretation, Buddha's philosophy is not pessimistic. As Rahula notes, "First of all, Buddhism is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. If anything at all, it is realistic, for it takes a realistic view of life and the world.[362]

The Second Noble Truth (*tanha*) concerns the origins of suffering. Buddha taught that much of our suffering is caused by craving, self-desire, envy, greed, and ignorance. Suffering could also come from seeking great wealth and status or "being ignorant to the nature of reality."[363] Part of the delusion regarding reality is also not accepting our own impermanence. Buddha taught that overcoming craving, self-delusion, and ignorance could be solved by developing the mind, thinking carefully, and meditating. These three practices would lead to true happiness and enlightenment.[364]

The Third Noble Truth is referred to as "the End of Suffering," and follows quite logically from the second truth. This truth states that the cessation of suffering is possible. It becomes possible by removing the unhappiness caused by craving. Seeing clearly the truth of yourself, and the lack of a permanent self, can put an end to suffering. As Bodhi notes, "Freed from ignorance and craving, the *arahant* can never again be touched by fear, anxiety, disappointment, and worry."[365]

The Fourth Noble Truth is often called "the remedy" in that it is accomplished by following the Eightfold Path. In following the Path, you not only remove suffering but also can achieve nirvana.[366] For Buddhists, nirvana is "described in part as the perfectly peaceful and enlightened state of transformed consciousness in which passions and ignorance are extinguished."[367] Crim explains that "Nirvana was simply, directly, and absolutely the end of problems of ordinary human existence."[368] The importance of the Fourth Noble Truth and its relationship to the Eightfold Path is highlighted by Rahula: "Practically the whole of teaching of the Buddha, to which he devoted himself during forty-five years, deals in some way or other with this Path."[369] Because of their importance to the Buddhist worldview, we turn to a brief discussion of the tenets of the Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path. If the Four Noble Truths deal with the symptoms that create unhappiness and suffering, the Eightfold Path is the antidote. The elements that make up the Path are not seen as single steps, but rather as steps that are fused together—learned and practiced simultaneously. As Solé-Leris notes, "It must be clearly understood that, although the eight factors of the path are enumerated one after the other for purposes of explanation, the idea is not that they should be cultivated successively."[370]

1. *Right view is achieving a correct understanding and accepting the reality and origins of suffering and the ways leading to the cessation of suffering.* Often referred to as "right knowledge" or "complete view," this first principle implies an awareness of or a type of "intellectual orientation" toward the Four Noble Truths.[371] Specifically, "this involves developing the philosophical perspective that enables one to penetrate through one's deluded conceptions of reality."[372] What Buddha offered to his followers was a perspective that

gave them a kind of "map the mind can trust if we are to deploy our energies in the right direction."[373]

2. *Right purpose is being free from ill will, cruelty, and untruthfulness toward the self and others.* To follow in "the path," Buddha encouraged his followers to discover any "unwholesome" ways of thinking, "such as a desire to hide our feelings' imperfections," since these emotional obstructions hinder the development of a clear and peaceful mind.[374] This step is discussed by some teachers as the "motivation step," given that Buddha saw this step as implying a sincere commitment to follow the Noble Path.

3. *Right speech.* Buddha stressed that people should "use communication in the service of truth and harmony."[375] Right Speech has four specific components. Let us look at how Bodhi explains these four, since they offer insight into how a Buddhist might use language.

   > Factor 3 is *right speech* (*samma vaca)*, which has four components, each with a negative side and a positive side: (i) abstinence from false speech, and instead speaking the truth; (ii) abstinence from divisive speech, and speaking words that conduce harmony; (iii) abstinence from harsh speech, and speaking gently; (iv) abstinence from idle chatter, and speaking what is meaningful on the proper occasion.[376]

4. *Right action,* some have said, is Buddha's version of the Ten Commandments, for his fourth principle "aims at promoting moral, honourable and peaceful conduct."[377] Among other things, this path calls for abstaining from the taking of life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from lying, and from drinking intoxicants. What this step is asking you to do is learn self-control and be mindful of the rights of others.

5. *Right livelihood* means refraining "from occupations that harm living beings—for example, selling of weapons, liquor, poison, slaves, or livestock."[378] Buddha believed that these forms of livelihood were not conducive to spiritual progress.

6. *Right efforts* are "summarized in four terms: *avoiding* and *overcoming* unwholesome states of mind while *developing* and *maintaining* wholesome states of mind."[379] Letting the mind experience anger, agitation, and even dullness, Buddha believed, would obstruct one's effort in that it would keep a person from "cultivating mindfulness and concentration."[380]

7. *Right mindfulness* is, as Solé-Leris notes, "the mindful, unbiased observation of all phenomena in order to perceive them and experience them as they are in actual fact, without emotional or intellectual distortions."[381] This step goes to the heart of the Buddhist idea that liberation is accomplished through a mind that is aware of the moment. Gunaratana offers an excellent summary of mindfulness in the following paragraph:

   > Mindfulness is paying moment-to-moment attention to what is. A mindful mind is precise, penetrating, balanced, and uncluttered. It is like a mirror that reflects without distortion whatever stands before it.[382]

8. *Right concentration,* although it comes as the final entry in the Eightfold Path sequence, is one of the most important. In everyday terms, right concentration begins with meditation, which is complete attentiveness on a single object and the achievement of purity of thought, free from all hindrances and distractions. When the mind is still,

according to Buddha, "the true nature of everything is reflected."[383] Newberg underscores the significance of this idea regarding reality when he writes, "For the Buddhists, who do not have a concept of God that in any way resembles Christianity, meditation was a means to connect with the underlying reality of life."[384]

CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS

The Improbability of Language. One of the teachings of Buddha that can influence intercultural communication centers on the Buddhist view toward language. Buddhism requires abandonment of views generated by the use of ordinary words and scriptures. In Buddhism "language is considered deceptive and misleading with regard to the matter of understanding the truth."[385] Brabant-Smith offers much the same idea when he notes, "Ordinary language tends to deal with physical things and experiences, as understood by ordinary man; whereas Dharma language (Buddha's teaching) deals with the mental world, with the intangible non-physical world."[386] This notion finds expression in two famous Buddhist statements: "Beware of the false illusions created by words," and "Do not accept what you hear by report."[387] These sayings reflect Buddhists' belief that there is a supreme and wonderful truth that words cannot reach or teach—that is transmitted outside of ritual and language. A Buddhist teacher expressed it this way: "A special transmission outside the scriptures; No dependence upon words or letters; Direct pointing at the mind of man; Seeing into one's nature and the attainment of Buddhahood."[388]

Impermanency. While we have already alluded to the notion of impermanency, we briefly return to it again since it is one of the Buddhist ideas that is translated into action. That is to say, accepting the view that all people and events are transitory gives the Buddhist an outlook on life that perceives all events and people to be fleeting, and therefore subject to change. Buddha once wrote, "Snow falls upon the river, white for an instant then gone forever."[389] It was his way of stressing the impermanent nature of all things. He taught that everything, both good and bad, is always changing—always in a state of flux. Buddha believed that recognizing that nothing is permanent would encourage his followers to appreciate the moment, accept the tentative nature of life, and treat other people with kindness. Moving the notion of impermanency to a code of conduct that might influence interaction, Buddha told his followers that "People forget that their lives will end soon. For those who remember, quarrels come to an end."[390] This idea regarding the unpredictable character of life is eloquently stated by the second-century Buddhist philosopher Narajuna: "Life is so fragile, more so than a bubble blown to and fro by the wind. How truly astonishing are those who think that after breathing out, they will surely breathe in again, or that they will awaken after a night's sleep."

Karma. Buddha's teaching regarding karma is important because it sets the tone for ethical standards. The word *karma*, for the Buddhist, "is used to denote volitional acts which find expression in thought, speech or physical deeds, which are good, evil or a mixture of both and are liable to give rise to consequences, which partly determine the goodness or badness of these acts."[391] The key word in the preceding definition is "volition." What Buddha was trying to teach his followers was that people make choices and that those choices have consequences—for other people as well as for the person who generates the action. This way of thinking is often referred to as the *law of action and reaction*. Buddha also taught "that individuals have within themselves the potential to change their own Karma."[392] Hence, Buddha rejected the notion of divination and appealing to a higher

source for good karma. Buddha stated, "All beings are the owners of their deeds (Karma), the heirs of their deeds; their deeds are the womb from which they sprang. . . . Whatever deeds they do—good or evil—of such they will be the heirs."[393] When Buddha speaks of "heirs," he is referring to the concept that the manifestations of one's karma remain beyond the physical death of the person. In fact, karma can span many lifetimes. Bogoda underscores this key point when he writes:

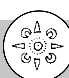
> The only thing we own that remains with us beyond death is our karma, our intentional deeds. Our deeds continue, bringing into being a new form of life until all craving is extinguished. We are born and evolve according to the quality of our karma. Good deeds will produce a good rebirth, bad deeds a bad rebirth.[394]

NOTIONS ABOUT DEATH

Having just mentioned karma. we now turn to the Buddhist view of death, which is directly tied to the notion of karma. Although Buddha did not spend a great deal of time on the subject of death, his teachings on two subjects are significant: (1) the physical act of dying and (2) the concept of rebirth. Buddha's realistic explanation of the physical component of death is explained by Crum: "The classical Buddhist view of death is that it is an unavoidable feature of existence and it can cause anguish only when one attempts, in whatever way, to elude it, even if it is by way of mental speculation on the nature of death or an eternal soul."[395]

The reason there is not a soul in the Buddhist worldview is that the body is mortal; therefore, when a person dies all consciousness and all mental activity end. To have a soul implies that there is a version of the self that survives the physical dimension of death. Although in Buddhism there is never a discussion of a soul, at least in the traditional sense, there is an explanation regarding an afterlife—one that is linked to the person's karma. According to Buddhism, death is only an end to a temporary phenomenon. In some ways Buddhists perceive death as ending one chapter and starting another. To stay with the analogy of chapters, it should be pointed out that there can be many chapters because the person might be born over and over in different times and forms. When the organic life ends, the forces of karma take over because they have not been destroyed—this is rebirth. Alternatively, as Ottama states it, "our past karma is rebirth itself."[396] It is believed that the person's past deeds, both wholesome and unwholesome, play a role in how many times he or she is reborn. As long as the person is greedy, manifests hatred, does not control immoral behavior, and continues to engage in self-delusion, he or she will continue to produce bad karma. Once there is enough good karma, the person will experience nirvana. As noted earlier, nirvana in its unadorned state is complete bliss. More specifically, nirvana is freedom from unhappiness, a different mode of existence, and a way of seeing the world in its true nature.[397]

The actual funeral rite in the Buddhist religion varies from culture to culture and is influenced by which type of Buddhism the deceased practiced. However, in most instances

REMEMBER THIS 

Buddha was concerned with having his followers discover the causes of suffering and through their individual practices overcome those causes and realize inner peace.

the funeral is seen not merely as an end of life but also as a transition to another life. This somewhat ritualized rite of passage includes the family and friends coming together to pay their respects before the body is cremated[398] or disposed of in another manner.

Confucianism

As is the case with all religious traditions, Confucianism, for thousands of years, has had a major role in shaping the culture and history of millions of people. Taylor makes the same important point when he writes, "The Confucian influence has stretched across the broad sweep of history from its founding to the contemporary age. Today, it is even discussed in Western circles because of its global impact on the diversity of cultures and their worldviews."[399] In modern terms, Taylor is saying that "many analysts who have studied the East Asian economic miracle over the past three decades have concluded that Confucian values like emphasis on the future, work, achievement, education, merit, and frugality have played a crucial role in [East Asian nations'] development."[400] The importance of Confucianism to the study of communication is made clear by Gudykunst and Kim when they write, "Confucianism influences behavior in most Asian cultures and influences the behavior of Asians living in non-Asian cultures."[401]

Although Confucianism has a profound influence throughout the world, its greatest impact for thousands of years has been on the people of China. As Barry, Chen, and Watson note, "If we were to describe in one word the Chinese way of life for the last two thousand years, the word would be 'Confucian.'"[402] The roots of Confucianism are planted so deep in China that even during the antireligious period of Communism, the leaders borrowed the Confucian notions of selflessness, allegiance, and deference to help accomplish their purpose of controlling the masses.[403]

We should point out that Confucianism, at least in the conventional sense, is not thought of as a formal religion. In fact, it began as "a system of ethical precepts for the proper management of society," and it is still often considered a social and political philosophy.[404] Confucius himself went as far as to "discourage prayer."[405] But, if Confucianism is not a religion, then what is this worldview that in one form or another touches over one billion people? Crim gives a partial answer to the question when he writes that it is a "system of social, political, ethical, and religious thought based on the teachings of Confucius and his successors."[406] Notice that he uses the words "religious thought" instead of the word "religion."

CONFUCIUS THE MAN

As was the case with Buddhism, Confucianism centers on the teachings of a single man: Confucius (*Kǒng Fūzǐ*). The importance of this man is noted by Scarborough when he writes, "Confucius is perhaps the most influential individual in Asian history, not so much for his views on government as for his teachings on the proper relationships and conduct among people."[407] In spite of the meaning of his life to world history, "our knowledge of the life of Confucius is somewhat sketchy, and rife with legend."[408] Confucius was born in 551 B.C. in the small feudal state of Lu, which is now the Shandong province in eastern China. Confucius dabbled at various careers early in his life, and held several government positions. However, at around the age

of thirty, he turned to teaching. What Confucius taught grew out of his observations about the human condition in China during his lifetime. As Crim notes, "Confucius was witness to the political disintegration of the feudal order, an era characterized by the hegemony of various states and almost constant internecine warfare."[409] In response to these observations, "Confucius asserted that government must be founded on virtue, and that all citizens must be attentive to the duties of their position."[410] As McGreal points out, "People were impressed by his integrity, honesty, and particularly his pleasant personality and his enthusiasm as a teacher. Three thousand people came to study under him and over seventy became well-established scholars."[411] These followers are important to Asian history because they carried on the work of Confucius after his death.

CORE ASSUMPTIONS

There are a number of overriding principles that help explain Confucianism. First is the supposition that people are basically good and only have to learn, by example, what constitutes correct behavior.[412] Confucius even suggested how to bring about this correct behavior. Specifically, he said that the best "way to actualize this goodness is through education, self-reflection, self-cultivation, and by behavior in accordance with the established norms of the culture."[413] Second, Confucius stressed a deep commitment to social harmony. That harmony meant fulfilling the familial and secular obligations needed to live and work together. As Soeng points out, "Confucian ideology provides the framework in which both live in a benevolent relationship."[414] In carrying out these relationships, Confucianism "emphasizes the individual's social relations and social responsibility over self-consciousness: people perceive themselves according to their social relationships and responsibilities as opposed to their individual being."[415] As Yum notes, "Confucianism is a philosophy of human nature that considers proper human relationships as the basis of society."[416] These "proper" relationships involved such things as the protection of "face," dignity, self-respect, reputation, honor, and prestige.

THE ANALECTS

Confucius did not write down his philosophy. Therefore, the details of his teaching have come to us through his disciples. The most influential and far-reaching of these collections is the Analects, which literally means "discussion over Confucius' words." These books were not written in a systematic and structured fashion. Rather, the Analects were written over a fifty-year period and consist of twenty books. Today, the Analects continue to exert considerable influence on Chinese and East Asian values and behavior. The books teach basic Confucian values in the form of aphorisms, sayings, stories, proverbs, and the like.[417] The importance of this work to Chinese culture was demonstrated when quotes from the Analects were used in the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS

As we have already indicated, Confucianism teaches that the proper and suitable foundation for society is based on respect for human dignity. That respect stresses the proper hierarchy in social relationships among family members, community, and superiors. Confucius set forth a series of ideals that structured much of his thought about these

relationships. An understanding of some of these teachings will help you appreciate Asian perception and interaction.

***Jen* (humanism).** Most scholars agree that the idea of *jen* is the cornerstone of what Confucius taught. At its core, *jen* is related to the concept of reciprocity. *Jen*, as Smith points out, "is the ideal relationship which should pertain between individuals."[418] In Confucius philosophy, *jen* "defines the basic relationship between people in a way that respects the moral integrity of the individual and his or her relations with others."[419] The basic belief in the integrity of all people is a reflection of the premise that people are by nature good, and *jen* is meant to mirror that goodness. This means that regardless of one's status or personality, conflict can and should be avoided. In its place people should strive for harmony in their interactions with other people.

***Li* (rituals, rites, proprieties, conventions).** *Li* is the outward expression of good manners—the way things should be done. As Corduan succinctly states, "*Li* is the principle of doing the right thing at the right time."[420] It has to do with "rules" of harmony that a person follows "in the home, the society, and the empire."[421] In contemporary times, *li* could be something as straightforward as not interrupting the person you are talking with or bowing as a correct greeting.

***Te* (power).** *Te* literally means power. But for Confucius it was power that was properly employed for the betterment of everyone. He strongly believed that "leaders must be persons of character, sincerely devoted to the common good and possessed of the character that compels respect."[422]

***Wen* (the arts).** Confucius had great reverence for the arts. As Gannon points out, Confucius saw the "arts as a means of peace and as an instrument of moral education."[423] You can further observe that veneration in the following quotation: "By poetry the mind is aroused; from music the finish is received. The odes quicken the mind. They induce self-contemplation. They teach the art of sensibility. They help to retrain resentment. They bring home the duty of serving one's parents and one's prince."[424]

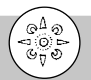
CONFUCIANISM AND COMMUNICATION

As is the case with all the worldviews we have examined, Confucianism influences perception and communication in a variety of ways. First, Confucianism teaches, both directly and indirectly, the notion of *empathy*. For example, *jen* is often thought of as "the capacity to measure the feelings of others by one's own."[425] This is the definition of empathy.

Second, when communicating, those who follow Confucian philosophy would be concerned with *status and role relationships*. Remember, it was the goal of Confucius "to make social relationships work without strife"[426] and part of that working is manifested in proper status and role relationships. Chiu and Hong explain this key element when they note, "It prescribes different obligatory requirements for different role relationships; for example, loyalty of the ruled to their ruler, filial piety of sons and daughters to their parents, respect for brothers, and trust for friends."[427] These different role relationships influence everything from differentiated linguistic codes (words showing respect and rank)[428]

to "paternalistic leadership" in business and educational settings.[429]

Third, Confucian principles manifest great concern for *ritual and protocol*. As we noted earlier, social etiquette was an important part of Confucian teaching. Novak reminds us that "in Confucius's view, attentive performance of social ritual and everyday etiquette shapes human character in accordance with archetypal patterns."[430] In the business context, according to Beamer and Varner, ritual and protocol can be seen in the fact that when negotiating, the Chinese "have a preference for form."[431] This desire for form and correct manners, the Chinese believe, will preserve harmony among the participants.

REMEMBER THIS 

Confucius was primarily concerned with maintaining social harmony in all interpersonal relationships.

Finally, Confucian philosophy would tend to encourage the use of indirect instead of direct language. In North America, people often ask very direct questions, are sometimes blunt, and frequently use the word "no." Confucian philosophy, on the other hand, encourages indirect communication. For example, "In Chinese culture, requests often are implied rather than stated explicitly for the sake of relational harmony and face maintenance."[432] Yum makes much the same point while demonstrating the link between Confucianism and talk:

> The Confucian legacy of consideration for others and concern for proper human relationships has led to the development of communication patterns that preserve one another's face. Indirect communication helps to prevent the embarrassment of rejection by the other person or disagreement among partners.[433]

NOTIONS ABOUT DEATH

Our discussion of death as applied to Confucianism will be very brief when compared to our discussion of death in the other five religious traditions. The reason for the brevity is simple. Confucius was not interested in death or an afterlife. The essence of his view of death is often summarized in a famous exchange Confucius had with one of his disciples:

> Chi lu (*Tzu lu*) asked about serving the spiritual beings. Confucius said "If we are not yet able to serve man, how can we serve spiritual beings" "I venture to ask about death." Confucius said, "If we do not know about life, how can we know about death?"[434]

As you can observe from the above dialogue, Confucius showed little interest in the topic of death. He believed that death came with dignity if persons had fulfilled their responsibilities to their family and to society. Taylor abstracted this same view when he wrote that Confucius "is only concerned with the moral transformation of the physical world in which we currently live—not with attempting to reach a better place after death."[435]

CONSIDER THIS

Why do cultures conceive of death is so many different ways? Which orientation comes closest to your conception of death?

Religion and Worldview: A Final Thought

One of the key points of this chapter has been the idea that there are a variety of approaches to dealing with cosmic questions about life and death. It seems Homer was right when he noted in about 800 B.C. that "all men need the gods." The potential problem, as we saw in this chapter, is that they can't agree on which gods. Friedman makes the same point when he notes, "God speaks multiple languages."[436] Because of space constraints, we were only able to look at some of those "languages." It is obvious that we had to omit numerous worldviews and religions from our analysis. For example, in the Western world there are millions of people who are Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Unitarians. There are also people who follow New Age philosophies as a worldview or practice Wicca (a modern pagan tradition). Turning to Asia and East Asia, we did not include Sikhism, Taoism, Baha'i, or Shintoism. We also omitted primal religions practiced in parts of Africa, Australia, and the Pacific Islands, as well as in the native Indian cultures of North and South America. Should you find the time and opportunity to learn about these religions and worldviews, you will again discover the crucial link between worldview and communication. You will also reaffirm the central message of this chapter: religion, for thousands of years, has had a pronounced impact on the life of every culture and the lives of the members of those cultures. Today, perhaps more than ever before, that impact cannot be ignored. The question is clear—can the world's great religions and multiple worldviews learn to talk to each other? Friedman poses the same question in the following paragraph:

> Can Islam, Christianity, and Judaism know that God speaks Arabic on Fridays, Hebrew on Saturdays, and Latin on Sundays, and that he welcomes different human beings approaching him through their own history, out of their own history, out of their language and cultural heritage?[437]

SUMMARY

- Worldview is a culture's orientation toward God, humanity, nature, the universe, life, death, sickness, and other philosophical issues concerning existence.
- Although worldview is communicated in a variety of ways (such as secularism and spirituality), religion is the predominant element of culture from which one's worldview is derived.
- Although all religions have some unique features, they share many similarities. These include, among other things, speculation about the meaning of life, sacred scriptures, rituals, ethics, and a safe haven for their members.
- The six most prominent religious traditions are Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. These traditions present their members with advice on how to live life and with explanations about death.

ACTIVITIES

1. In a small group, try to answer the following question: Why has religion been so relevant to humankind for more than ten thousand years?
2. Attend a religious service of a faith that is very unfamiliar to you, and try to determine the rituals and messages that might influence perceptions of members of that faith.
3. In a small group, discuss what aspects of religion are most directly related to perception and communication.
4. In a small group, discuss the following topic: "How does my view of death compare with the beliefs found in the six great religious traditions"? As part of your discussion, include your observation on how a person's perception of death might influence his or her behavior.
5. In a small group, discuss the common principles and practices you see among all of the major religions.

DISCUSSION IDEAS

1. Explain how understanding the religious aspect of a particular culture's lifestyle might help you understand that culture's worldview.
2. Explain the phrase "religion is only one kind of worldview." What is the link between religion and the values of a culture?
3. What common set of ethics can you identify from the six religious traditions discussed in this chapter?
4. Explain the similarities and differences between Sunni and Shiites.

CHAPTER 4

Culture and the Individual: Cultural Identity

The particular human chain we're part of is central to our individual identity.

ELIZABETH STONE

The value of identity of course is that so often with it comes purpose.

RICHARD GRANT

Identity is an abstract, multifaceted concept that plays a significant role in intercultural communication interactions. Globalization, intercultural marriage, and immigration patterns promise to add even greater complexity to cultural identities in this century.[1] With this in mind, we will use this chapter to discuss some of the various aspects of identity. In Chapters 2 and 3, we examined how the deep structures of culture contribute to your identities, and we will return to the topic of identities throughout the book.

Since the concept is so pervasive, it is necessary to have a good appreciation of exactly what identity entails. To provide that understanding, we begin by pointing out the expanding need to understand the role of identity in our culturally diverse society. This is followed by a theoretical definition of identity, a discussion of a few of your various identities, and an examination of some of the many different ways identity is acquired. We then address the assortment of ways in which you establish and enact your cultural identities and the role of identity in communication. Next, we look at the growing phenomenon of bicultural and multicultural identities that are being produced by globalization. The chapter will conclude with an examination of some of the negative aspects of identity, which include stereotyping, prejudice, racism, and ethnocentrism.

The Importance of Identity

CONSIDER THIS

Who am I? Stop for a minute and reflect on that question. Jot down a few of your thoughts. Some people find the question relatively easy and are able to produce a lengthy list of identifiers. Others may struggle and be able to write down only a few items. Regardless of the length of your list, the answers provided will offer insight into some of your many identities.

According to Pinney, a principal objective of one's adolescent years is the formation of an identity, and "those who fail to achieve a secure identity are faced with identity confusion, a lack of clarity about who they are and what their role is in life."[2] This suggests that identity development plays a critical role in the individual's psychological well-being. Thus, the necessity of understanding your sense of identity is self-evident.

An understanding of identity is also an essential aspect of the study and practice of intercultural communication.[3] Increased international contact driven by the processes of globalization and armed conflicts, and domestic diversity arising from immigration, intercultural marriages, and divergent values add to the importance of identity in intercultural situations.

The growing awareness of identity among U.S. Americans was demonstrated in the 2000 census, which was the first time respondents were allowed to select more than one category to report their racial identity. Some 2.4 percent of the respondents, representing almost seven million U.S. Americans, identified themselves as being of two or more races.[4] Another question on Census 2000 allowed individuals to write in their "ancestry or ethnic origin." That question produced about five hundred different categories,[5] and more than ninety of the categories had populations in excess of one hundred thousand.[6] The Census Bureau reports that the information will help users "tailor services to accommodate cultural differences" and "address the language and cultural diversity of various groups."[7] It is also a good measure of diversity in the United States and the level of awareness that people have about their identity.

The unsettled world that we all live in is in part influenced by adherence to varying perceptions of identity. Writing in the *New York Times*, Brooks talks of a "great reshuffling of identities, and the creation of new, often more rigid groupings."[8] He contends that despite the influence of information technologies and the forces of globalization, "old national identities are proving surprisingly durable."[9] Brooks sees people becoming more self-segregated and distancing themselves, socially and physically, from groups that exhibit different cultural traits, which can encompass political views, religious beliefs, and lifestyle choices. The rapidly changing world order and the upheaval of traditional social structures are creating a high degree of uncertainty among many people. In reaction to these changes, "[m]any millions of people believe that their best haven of certainty and security is a group based on ethnic similarity, common faith, economic interest, or political like-mindedness."[10] In other words, as people struggle to adapt to the dynamics of modern social life, filled with the push and pull of globalization and traditional ways, identity is becoming an important factor in how they live their lives and with whom they associate.

Of immediate concern to the study of intercultural communication is how identity influences and guides expectations about your own and others' social roles, and provides

guidelines for your communication interaction with others.[11] For example, in the United States the cultural model for classroom interactions between a professor and students is very well defined. During lectures, students are free to ask questions and respectfully challenge the professor's assertions. Students are aware that the professor may call on them to answer questions about the lesson, and this anticipation instills a motivation to be prepared. Identity as professor or student provides the blueprint for classroom behavior. However, the blueprint described here is designed for a classroom in the United States. In collective cultures, such as Japan, the identity roles are the same, but the expectations are quite different. Japanese students do not normally expect to be called on to answer questions, and they seldom ask their professor questions during class. This example is somewhat oversimplified, but it demonstrates the importance of understanding the role of identity in an intercultural situation.

There are many more reasons for the need to gain an awareness of identity and its influence on intercultural interactions. We believe, however, that the above discussion should convince you of the need to become better acquainted with both your own identity and that of others. To help you with that task, we will begin with a definition of identity.

Explaining Identity

As we mentioned earlier, identity is an abstract, complex, and dynamic concept. As a result of those characteristics, identity is not easily defined, and therefore communication scholars have provided a variety of descriptions. Gardiner and Kosmitzki, for example, see identity as "a person's self-definition as a separate and distinct individual, including behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes."[12] Ting-Toomey considers identity to be the "reflective self-conception or self-image that we each derive from our family, gender, cultural, ethnic, and individual socialization process. Identity basically refers to our reflective views of ourselves and other perceptions of our self-images."[13] In a more concise definition, Martin and Nakayama characterize identity as "our self-concept, who we think we are as a person."[14] For Mathews, "Identity is how the self conceives of itself, and labels itself."[15] While all of these definitions treat identity in its broadest sense, some communication scholars address cultural identity more specifically.

Fong contends that "culture and cultural identity in the study of intercultural relations have become umbrella terms that subsume racial and ethnic identity."[16] She defines cultural identity as

> The identification of communications of a shared system of symbolic verbal and nonverbal behavior that are meaningful to group members who have a sense of belonging and who share traditions, heritage, language, and similar norms of appropriate behavior. Cultural identity is a social construction.[17]

Lustig and Koester look at cultural identity as "one's sense of belonging to a particular cultural or ethnic group."[18] Ting-Toomey and Chung see cultural identity as "the emotional significance that we attach to our sense of belonging or affiliation with the larger culture."[19] For Klyukanov, "cultural identity can be viewed as membership in a group in which all people share the same symbolic meanings."[20]

This blizzard of definitions is not meant to confuse you but instead to demonstrate the abstractness of identity, which makes it difficult to construct a single, concise description agreeable to all. Part of the difficulty stems from how identity has been studied: it was an

early topic of interest in the fields of psychology and sociology,[21] and only later became a subject of investigation for intercultural communication scholars, who began to examine the cultural components of identity. As a result, some definitions address "identity" and others speak of "cultural identity." However, as we will demonstrate throughout the chapter, we believe that culture influences every facet of all your identities.

Identity is dynamic and multiple. By this we mean that identity is not static, but changes as a function of your life experiences.[22] In addition, you have more than one identity. Consider how you identified yourself in grade school, in high school, and after you entered college. During that time, you acquired some new identities and set aside some old ones. For example, you left behind the identity of a high school student and assumed that of a college student. However, you did retain the regional identity of your hometown and state and your cultural identity. Perhaps you gave up your identity as a member of a high school sports team, such as swimming or volleyball, and took on the identity of a sorority or fraternity member. As you can see, your identity is a composite of multiple identities, which are integrated; they do not work in isolation, but instead operate in combination based on the situation. As an illustration, when you are in the classroom, your identity as a student is salient, but you are still a male or a female, a friend of some of your classmates, a part-time employee, a son or daughter, and perhaps even a wife or a husband, to list just a few identities.

To help reduce some of the complexity of and better understand people's multiple identities, some researchers have constructed categories to classify the different kinds of identities. Turner offers three categories of classification: human identities, social identities, and personal identities.[23] *Human identities* are those perceptions of self that link you to the rest of humanity and set you apart from other life forms. *Social identities* are represented by the various groups you belong to, such as race, ethnicity, occupation, age, hometown, and others. Social identity is a product of the contrast between membership in some social groups and non-membership in others (i.e., the in-group/out-group dichotomy). *Personal identity* arises from those things that set you apart from other in-group members and mark you as special or unique. These things may be innate talents, such as the ability to play a musical instrument without formal training; special achievements, like winning an Olympic gold medal; or something as intangible as a gregarious personality.

Hall offers a similar categorization of identity. He says, "Each of us has three levels of identity that, depending on the context, may or may not be salient in our interactions with others. These three levels are personal, relational, and communal."[24] *Personal identities* are those that make you unique and distinct from others. *Relational identities* are a product of your relationships with other people, such as husband/wife, teacher/student, or executive/manager. *Communal identities* are "typically associated with large-scale communities, such as nationality, ethnicity, gender, or religious or political affiliation."[25]

Hall's communal identity is essentially the same as Taylor's social identity, and Gudykunst provides a further classification of that type of identity, which is considered important during intercultural communication.

> Our social identities can be based on our memberships in demographic categories (e.g., nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, social class), the roles we play (e.g., student, professor, parent), our membership in formal or informal organizations (e.g., political parties, social clubs), our associations or vocations (e.g., scientists, artists, gardeners), or our memberships in stigmatized groups (e.g., homeless, people with AIDS).[26]

This section has provided a theoretical understanding of identity as an abstract concept and attempted to show that an individual's identity is "made up of numerous overlapping aspects or subidentities."[27] We also discussed some ways of organizing your multiple identities into broad categories. Since they are the most relevant to intercultural communication interaction and study, we will now look at some different social identities and examine how they are influenced by culture.

Selected Social Identities

Although we use the terms *identity* and *identities* interchangeably, we have also pointed out that in actuality one's identity consists of multiple identities, which act in concert. The importance and saliency of any single identity is a function of the situation. As the context varies, you may choose to emphasize one or more of your identities. While attending class, your identity as a student will be in the forefront, but when you arrive at work, your occupational identity will become paramount. In both environments, however, some of your identities, such as race and biological sex, will also be present, albeit in a secondary role. Regardless of the identity or identities that are on display, all are tempered, to various degrees, by culture. In this section, we will examine a few of your many identities and illustrate how culture influences each.

Racial Identity

We should begin by explaining that *race* is a social construct arising from efforts to categorize people into different groups. According to Collier, race has been used by academic, government, and political agencies to identify groups of people as outsiders.[28] Researchers employing this perspective approach race as a socially constructed term related to issues of power. Allport indicates that anthropologists originally designated three separate races—Mongoloid, Caucasoid, and Negroid—but added others later.[29] These categories divided people into groups based solely on physical appearances. Today, racial identity is commonly associated with external physical traits such as skin color, hair texture, facial appearance, and eye shape.[30] Modern science, however, has found that there is very little genetic variation among human beings, which belies the precision of racial categorization as a means of classifying people. The concept has been further eroded by centuries of genetic intermixing,[31] which is becoming an increasing occurrence in contemporary society through intercultural marriage. The concept of racial identity persists in the United States as a socially constructed idea, no doubt abetted by the historical legacy of events such as slavery, the early persecution of American Indians, issues of civil rights, and most recently, a growing influx of immigrants.

Ethnic Identity

Because "the difference between the terms *race* and *ethnicity* has not been clarified adequately in the literature,"[32] the distinction between racial and ethnic identity can also be unclear and confusing. The problem is compounded further because people frequently delineate their ethnic identity in "highly individual ways according to their particular situation and circumstances."[33] From our perspective, however, racial identity is tied to a biological heritage that produces similar, identifiable physical characteristics. Ethnicity

or ethnic identity is derived from a sense of shared heritage, history, traditions, values, similar behaviors, area of origin, and in some instances, language.[34]

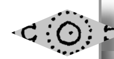
Some people derive their ethnic identity from a regional grouping, such as

- The Basques, who are located along the Spanish-French border
- The Bedouin, who are nomadic Arab groups that range from the eastern Sahara across North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, to the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia
- The Kurds, a large ethnic group in northeast Iraq, with communities in Turkey, Iran, and Syria
- The Roma (commonly called Gypsies) who are scattered across Eastern and Western Europe

In each of these groups, the sense of ethnicity transcends national borders and is grounded in common cultural beliefs and practices.

The ethnicity of many U.S. Americans is tied to their ancestors' place of origin prior to their coming to the United States from places such as Germany, Italy, Mexico, or China. After the arrival of the original immigrants, subsequent generations often refer to themselves using terms such as "German-American," "Italian-American," "Mexican-American," or "Chinese-American." As Chen explains, the hyphen both separates and connects the two cultural traditions.[35]

During the early years of the United States, immigrants often grouped together in a particular region to form ethnic communities, and some of these continue today, such as Chinatown in San Francisco and Little Italy in New York. New ethnic enclaves, like Little Saigon in the Los Angeles area, have developed following the arrival of more recent immigrants. In these areas, the people's sense of ethnic identity tends to remain strong, because traditional cultural practices, beliefs, and often language are followed and perpetuated. But as time passes, members of younger generations often move to areas of greater ethnic diversity and frequently marry into other ethnic groups. For some, this can dilute their feelings of ethnic identity, and today, it is not uncommon to hear U.S. Americans refer to their ethnicity by providing a lengthy historical account of their family's ethnic mergings. Others, especially those with a Euro-American heritage, will often simply refer to themselves as "just an American" or even "a White American." Frequently, they are members of the U.S. dominant culture, which grew out of Judeo-Christian religious traditions imported from Western Europe, and whose lineage is characterized by an extensive history of interethnic marriages over the years. Martin and Nakayama write that many cultural practices associated with "whiteness" are beyond the awareness of the actual participants, but are more

IMAGINE THIS 

Jason recently graduated from college. At the age of two, he was adopted in his native China by a Swedish-American couple and taken to live in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Jason has spent his entire life in Minneapolis and has had little contact with Chinese culture.

Shortly after the fall of Communism in 1989, Ingrid was born in a relocation camp for political refugees in West Germany. Her mother was from East Germany and her father was a native of Russia. Soon after her birth, Ingrid and her parents moved to England, where she has spent the past eighteen years.

What are the ethnic identities of Jason and Ingrid?

discernible by members of minority culture groups.[36] Thus, "whiteness" is often associated with positions of privilege.

Gender Identity

Gender identity is quite different from biological sex or sexual identity. *Gender* refers to how a particular culture differentiates masculine and feminine social roles. As Ting-Toomey tells us, "Gender identity, in short, refers to the meanings and interpretations we hold concerning our self-images and expected other-images of 'femaleness' and 'maleness.'"[37]

Cultural influences on what constitutes gender beauty and how it is displayed vary between cultures. In the United States, despite the threat of skin cancer, many young women consider having a good tan to be part of their summer beauty regimen. In Northeast and Southeast Asian cultures, however, dark skin is considered a mark of lower socioeconomic status and exposure to the sun is avoided. So important is light skin that both men and women often use skin-whitening cosmetics.[38] Language is another means of expressing gender differences. In Japanese, certain words are traditionally used exclusively by women, while men employ different words to express the same meaning. In English, there is little or no distinction between words used by women and those used by men. Cultural variations in gender identity can also be evident in fashion. James found that in Denmark:

> The men are more concerned with their weight than the women, who wear loose-fitting clothes, and hardly a miniskirt is to be seen—even among teenagers. This is because being extravagantly sexy is not the main way for women to advance themselves in Denmark.[39]

This is quite in contrast to fashion in the United States and many Western European nations.

Gender identity refers to the ways particular cultures differentiate between masculine and feminine roles.

Dennis MacDonald/PhotoEdit

National Identity

National identity refers to your nationality. The majority of people associate their national identity with the nation where they were born. But national identity can also be acquired by immigration and naturalization. People who have taken citizenship in a country different from their birthplace may eventually begin to adopt some or all aspects of a new national identity, depending on the strength of their attachment to their new homeland. Alternatively, people residing permanently in another nation may retain a strong attachment to their homeland. National identity usually becomes more pronounced when persons are away from their home country. When asked where they are from, international travelers normally respond with their national identity—i.e., "We are from Canada." There are, however, many instances where local affiliation outweighs national affiliation. Texans, for instance, are noted for identifying themselves as being from Texas rather than from "the States." International sporting events and periods of international crisis can also stimulate strong feelings of national identity.[40]

As we have indicated, identity is dynamic and can change contextually over time. A particularly interesting example of this dynamism is ongoing in the European Union, where younger generations are moving away from the national identity of their parents and adopting what might be termed a "transnational" identity. Thomas Reid reports that young adults from European Union nations tend to "think of 'Europe' as their native land."[41] To test this assertion, one of the authors asked two international graduate students—one from Austria and one from Germany—attending a U.S. university about their national identity. The student from Austria considered herself to be a "European" rather than Austrian. The other indicated that she still referred to herself as German, but said she had many friends who were confused about their national identity. Concern about national identity is so great in France that the government

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So strong is national identity that people often maintain their national identities even when they move to a different country or culture.

has established a Ministry of Immigration and National Identity, which is tasked with "better integrating newcomers and protecting French identity."[42]

Most nations are home to a number of different cultural groups, but one group usually exercises the most power and is often referred to as the dominant culture because its members maintain control of economic, governmental, and institutional organizations. This control leads to the establishment of a "national character," which has been defined as follows by Allport:

> "National character" implies that members of a nation, despite ethnic, racial, religious, or individual differences among them, do resemble one another in certain fundamental matters of belief and conduct, more than they resemble members of other nations.[43]

In the United States, the dominant culture is considered to comprise members of Western European ethnicity, and cultural traits arising from that heritage are ascribed to the nation as a whole and referred to as the "national character."

Regional Identity

With the exception of very small nations like Monaco or the Holy See (Vatican City), every country can be divided into a number of different geographical regions, and often these regions reflect varying cultural traits. The cultural contrasts among these regions may be manifested through ethnicity, language, accent, dialect, customs, food, dress, or different historical and political legacies. Residents of these regions use one or more of those characteristics to demonstrate their regional identity. For example, although the total population of Belgium is just over ten million, the country has three official languages—Dutch, French, and German.

In the United States, many regional identities are delimited by state boundary lines, and almost everyone is proud of his or her home state. Residents of Texas and California offer prime examples of pride in regional identity. Louisiana is marked by a distinct cultural tradition derived from its French historical heritage. Regional identity can also be based on a larger geographical area, such as New England, "down South," "back East," or the Midwest.

In Japan, regional identity is marked by a variety of different dialects (e.g., Tokyo, Kansai, Tohoku, etc.) and some of those dialects (e.g., Kagoshima and Okinawa) are difficult for Japanese from other regions to understand. Japanese living overseas often form clubs based on their home prefecture and hold periodic gatherings to celebrate their common traditions. Despite reunification, separate East and West German identities remain a reality. Mexicans demonstrate their regional identity when they tell people they are from Sinaloa, Michoacan, Oaxaca, or Mexico City. Political division resulting from war has imposed regional identities on residents of North and South Korea.

Organizational Identity

In some cultures, a person's organizational affiliation can be an important source of identity. This is especially true in collectivistic cultures, but far less so in individualistic cultures. To illustrate this dichotomy, we will contrast organizational identity practices in Japan, a collectivistic culture, and the United States, an individualistic culture.

While this practice is becoming less prevalent among younger employees, Japanese businessmen employed by large corporations have traditionally worn a small lapel pin to signal company affiliation. There is no similar practice among managers and executives in the United States. Although some in the United States occasionally may wear a polo shirt or a tie with a company logo, this is not a common or habitual practice. In Japan, a person's organizational identity is so important that during introductions the company's name is given before the individual's name. For example, Mrs. Suzuki, an employee at the Tokyo Bank, would be introduced as *Tōkyō Ginkō no Suzuki san* (literal translation: Tokyo Bank of Suzuki Mrs.).[44] In the United States, an individual is introduced by his or her name first and then by his or her organization. On business cards, the Japanese businessperson's company and position are placed above his or her name. On American business cards, the company name is normally at the top, followed by the individual's name in large, bold letters, and the organizational position is under the name in smaller type. These rather simplistic and seemingly mundane examples offer insight into how collective cultures stress group membership and individualistic cultures emphasize the individual.

Personal Identity

Earlier in this chapter we noted that personal identity consists of those characteristics that set one apart from others in his or her in-group, those things that make one unique, and how one sees oneself. Cultural influences also come into play when determining personal identity. Markus and Kitayama report that "people in different cultures have strikingly different construals of the self, of others, and of the interdependence between the two."[45] People from individualistic cultures like the United States and Western Europe work to exemplify their differences from others, but members of collectivistic cultures tend to emphasize their group membership or connection to others. While still slaves to fashion, most U.S. Americans try to demonstrate their personal identity in their dress and appearance. In collective cultures, like Japan, people tend to dress in a similar fashion because it is important, and often even necessary, to blend in.

Cyber and Fantasy Identity

The Internet allows you to quickly and easily access and exchange information on a worldwide basis. As Suler, a psychologist, informs us, the Internet also provides an opportunity to escape the constraints of everyday identities:

> One of the interesting things about the Internet is the opportunity it offers people to present themselves in a variety of different ways. You can alter your style of being just slightly or indulge in wild experiments with your identity by changing your age, history, personality, physical appearance, even your gender. The username you choose, the details you do or don't indicate about yourself, the information presented on your personal web page, the persona or avatar you assume in an online community—all important aspects of how people manage their identity in cyberspace.[46]

The Internet allows individuals to select and promote what they consider the positive features of their identity and omit any perceived negative elements, or even construct entirely new identities. According to Suler, some online groups require participants to

Personal identity arises from those objects and ideas that help set you apart from the dominant culture and that you believe mark you as a member of a certain group.

Rudi Von Briel/PhotoEdit

assume an "imaginary persona," and infatuation with these invented identities can become so strong they can "take a life of their own."[47] The Internet is replete with websites, such as Facebook, that allow users to construct a cyber identity that may or may not correspond to their actual identity. The website Second Life is another notable example of the "virtual world" websites that facilitate cyber identity construction. Originally begun as a social networking site, where participants constructed avatars to represent themselves, it is now used by companies to hold meetings for employees working in distant locations.[48]

Fantasy identity, which also extends across cultures, centers on characters from science fiction movies, comic books, and anime. Every year, people attend domestic and international conventions devoted to these subjects. For example, the 2008 Hong Kong Ani-Comics and Game Fair Festival was expected to draw 400,000 visitors over five days.[49] Comic-Con International has been held annually in San Diego, California, since 1970; in 2007 it attracted more than 125,000 attendees and exhibitors.[50] At these gatherings, some attendees come dressed, individually or in groups, as their favorite fantasy character or characters. For a few hours or days, they assume and enact the identity of their favorite media character.

There are many additional forms of identity that play a significant role in the daily lives of people. For example, we have not examined the functions of age, religion, socio-economic class, physical ability, or minority status, all of which are part of most individuals' identity and are influenced by culture. However, the several different identities discussed should give you an awareness of the complexity of the topic and of how culture can influence our identities. Now, let us look at how we acquire our identities.

Acquiring and Developing Identities

As we discussed earlier, identities are largely a product of group membership. This is mentioned by Ting-Toomey when she writes, "Individuals acquire and develop their identities through interaction with others in their cultural group."[51] Identity development, then, becomes a process of familial and cultural socialization, exposure to other cultures, and personal development. We have already looked at the family in Chapter 2, but the influence of family on identity is so great that we need to touch on a few points here. The initial exposure to your identity came from your family, where you began to learn culturally appropriate beliefs, values, and social roles.[52] Guidance from family members begins at a very young age, when they teach children the proper behavior for boys and girls. This instills gender identity. Interacting with extended family members teaches different age-appropriate behaviors. It is also the family that first begins to inculcate the concept of an individual- or group-based identity.

Upon entering school, you were required to learn and demonstrate the behaviors that are culturally ascribed for a student. The media also played a considerable role in your identity development. The near-constant exposure to media stereotypes creates a sense of how we should look, dress, and act in order to present age- and gender-appropriate identities. Media is used to recruit people to join different groups, such as those for or against a specific activity such as gay marriage, abortion, or the war in Iraq, and inclusion in such a group imparts another identity.

From a theoretical perspective, Phinney offers a three-stage model to help understand identity development.[53] Although her model focuses on ethnic identity among adolescents, it can also be applied to the acquisition and growth of cultural identity. *Unexamined ethnic identity*, the initial stage, is "characterized by the lack of exploration of ethnicity."[54] During this stage, individuals are not particularly interested in exploring or demonstrating their personal ethnicity. For members of minority cultures, this lack of interest may result from the desire to suppress their own ethnicity in an effort to identify with the majority culture. Majority members in the United States, on the other hand, seem to take for granted that their identity is the social norm and give little thought to their own ethnicity.[55]

The second stage, *ethnic identity search*, begins when individuals become interested in learning about and understanding their own ethnic identity. Movement from stage one to stage two can result from a variety of stimulations. An incident of discrimination might move members of a minority to reflect on their own ethnicity. This could lead to a realization that some beliefs and values of the majority culture can be detrimental to minority members,[56] and stimulate a movement toward one's own ethnicity. Dolores Tanno grew up in northern New Mexico and had always considered herself Spanish. After leaving New Mexico, she discovered that some people saw her as Mexican rather than Spanish, and this motivated her ethnic identity search.[57] Increased interest in ethnic identity could come from attending a cultural event, taking a culture class, or some other event that produces a greater awareness of one's cultural

heritage. *Ethnic achievement*, Phinney's final stage of identity development, is reached when individuals have a clear and confident understanding of their own cultural identity. For members of a minority, this usually comes with an ability to effectively deal with discrimination and negative stereotypes.[58] Identity achievement can also provide one with greater self-confidence and feelings of personal worth.

Martin and Nakayama have constructed separate four-stage identity development models for minority and majority members. In the minority model, *unexamined identity*, the initial stage, is similar to Phinney's model, in which individuals are not really concerned with issues of identity. During stage two, *conformity*, minority members endeavor to fit in with the dominant culture and may even possess negative self-images. *Resistance and separatism*, stage three, is usually the result of some cultural awakening that stimulates a greater interest in and adherence to one's own culture. Concurrently, rejection of all or selected aspects of the dominant culture may occur. In the final stage, *integration*, individuals have a sense of pride in and identity with their own cultural group, and demonstrate an acceptance of other cultural groups.[59]

The model for majority identity development follows a similar first stage, *unexamined identity*, where identity is not a concern. *Acceptance*, the second stage, is characterized by acquiescence to existing social inequities, even though such acceptance may be at an unconscious level. At the next stage, *resistance*, members of the dominant culture become more aware of existing social inequities, begin to question their own culture, and increase association with minority culture members. Achievement of the fourth and final stage, *redefinition and reintegration*, brings an increased understanding of one's dominant culture identity and an appreciation of minority cultures.[60]

Based on how they were achieved, your identities can also be classified as ascribed or avowed.[61] This refers to whether your identities were obtained involuntarily or voluntarily. Your racial, ethnic, and sexual identities were assigned at birth and are considered *ascribed*, or involuntary. In hierarchical cultures where social status is often inherited, such as Mexico, a person's family name can be a strong source of ascribed identity. By contrast, your identity as a university student is *avowed* because you voluntarily elected to attend the school. Although being a university student is a voluntary identity, your culture has established expectations that delineate appropriate and inappropriate social behavior for college students. When enacting your college student identity, you will normally try to conform to those socially appropriate expectations, sometimes consciously and at other times subconsciously.[62]

Establishing and Enacting Cultural Identity

By now, you should have a clear understanding of what constitutes identity, an awareness of some of your many identities, and the difference between ascribed and avowed identities. This background will help you better understand how cultural identities are established and acted out.

As you go about your daily routine, stepping through various contexts, different identities are established, re-established, and displayed. By interacting with others you continually create and recreate your cultural identity through communication.[63] As Molden tells us, "It is through communication that we are able to express and (hence make known) our similarities and dissimilarities to others."[64] The communication employed to create and enact identity can take a variety of forms, including "conversation, commemorations of history, music, dance, ritual, ceremonial, and social drama of all sorts."[65]

As noted earlier, initial identity development and display are products of interaction with family members. Families are the source of stories that tie us to the past and provide us with a "sense of identity and connection to the world."[66] These stories are also infused with cultural beliefs and values, which become part of one's identity.

Culture's influence in establishing an individual's identity is demonstrated by contrasting student interaction styles in U.S. and Japanese schools. In the United States, individualism is stressed and even young children are taught to be independent and develop their personal identity. Schools in the United States encourage competition in the classroom and on the playing field. Students quickly learn to voice their opinions and feel free to challenge the opinions of others as a means of asserting their own identity. Being different is a common and valued trait. This is in contrast to the collective societies found in South America, West Africa, and Northeast Asia, where children learn the importance of family dependence and interdependence, and identity is "defined by relationships and group memberships."[67] This produces activities that promote identity tied to the group. In Japanese preschools and elementary schools, students are frequently divided into small groups (*han*), where they are encouraged to solve problems collectively rather than individually.[68] The young Japanese students' identities are drawn from their study group and the school they attend. They are taught to avoid being different and to adhere to the Japanese proverb "A tall tree catches much wind."

Identities are also established and displayed in cultural rites of passage, which are used to help adolescents gain an increased awareness of who they are as they enter adulthood.[69] In some underdeveloped societies, the rite can involve a painful physical

Gloria Thomas

Identities can be displayed in cultural rites of passage.

experience, such as male or female circumcision, but in developed nations, the rite is usually less harsh and is often a festive celebration. The bar mitzvah, for instance, is used to introduce Jewish boys into adulthood, when they become more responsible for religious duties. In the Mexican culture, girls look forward to their *Quinceañera*, held on their fifteenth birthday. The celebration is a means of acknowledging that a young woman has reached sexual maturity and is now an adult, ready to assume additional family and social responsibilities. In addition, the celebration is intended to reaffirm religious faith, good morals, and traditional family values.[70] In the White American culture, rites of passage into adulthood are generally not as distinct, but are often associated with the individual attaining a greater degree of independence.[71] Graduation from high school or college, for example, brings increased expectations of self-sufficiency and a new identity.

Once established, identities are enacted in many ways, beginning in childhood and progressing through adolescence into the adult years. Individuals in almost every culture have ways of displaying their religious or spiritual identity. Many Jews wear yarmulkes or other distinctive clothes, and among Christians it is common to see a cross worn as an item of personal jewelry. Many Muslim women wear the traditional headscarf (*hijab*) as a means of conveying their religious identity.[72] Some men and women wear a red dot (*pottu*) on their forehead as a sign of their devotion to the Hindu religion. Each of these symbols identifies the wearer as belonging to a specific religious group, and thus is a sign of both inclusion and exclusion.

Identity is often signaled by involvement in commemorative events. The Fourth of July in the United States, Bastille Day in France, and Independence Day in Mexico are celebrations of national identity. The annual Saint Patrick's Day parade in New York City is an opportunity for people of Irish heritage to take pride in their ethnic identity. Oktoberfest celebrations allow people to rekindle their German identity, and the Lunar New Year is a time for the Chinese and many other Asian cultures to observe traditions that reaffirm their identities. Every summer, villages and cities all across Japan hold *matsuri* festivals, which are based on ancient Shinto traditions. These celebrations serve as a symbol of unity within the community and offer an opportunity for the participants to evince their regional identity.

While many customs of identity enactment are tradition-bound, evolving circumstances can bring about new ways. This type of change was discovered by David and Ayouby, who conducted a study of Arab minorities in the Detroit, Michigan, area. They found that a division existed between how early immigrants and more recent arrivals understood Arab identity.[73] Immigrants who arrived in the United States years earlier were satisfied "with meeting and enacting their ethnicity in a ritualistic fashion by eating Arabic food, perhaps listening to Arabic music, and even speaking Arabic to their limited ability."[74] The more recent Arab immigrant arrivals, however, had a "more politicized identity,"[75] resulting from their experiences in the civil wars and political turmoil of the Middle East. They felt that being an Arab involved taking a more active role in events in their native land, such as sending money back or becoming politically active.[76]

There are certainly many more ways of establishing and enacting your identity than we have discussed here. For instance, we did not address the obvious cultural identity markers of language, accents, or family names. But this overview should convince you of the complexity of your identities and how they are shaped by culture.

Identity in Intercultural Interactions

We have pointed out that your identity is established through communicative interaction with others. According to Hecht and his colleagues, identity is also "maintained and modified through social interaction. Identity then begins to influence interaction through shaping expectations and motivating behavior."[77] As was previously discussed, you are constantly moving in and out of different identities as you interact with other people, and with each identity, you employ a set of communicative behaviors appropriate for that identity and setting. Your culture has shaped your understanding and expectations as to what are the correct communication practices for various social settings—for example, a classroom, hospital, or sales meeting. However, these understandings and expectations are culture bound,[78] and what is appropriate in one culture may be inappropriate in another. We have already illustrated how student/teacher interaction differs in the United States and Japan. Students and teachers in the two countries have quite different culturally established standards for how they should act and communicate in the classroom. However, what if a Japanese student were placed in a U.S. classroom, or vice versa?

In an intercultural meeting, the varying expectations for identity display and communication style carry considerable potential for creating anxiety, misunderstandings, and even conflict. This is why Imahori and Cupach consider "cultural identity as a focal element in intercultural communication."[79] Continuing with our student/teacher example, try to imagine how students from a culture that does not value communicative assertiveness would feel in a typical U.S. classroom. Being unaccustomed to having the instructor query students, they would probably be reluctant to raise their hands and would likely consider U.S. students who challenged the teacher to be rude or even arrogant. To avoid potential problems during intercultural interaction, you need to develop what Collier calls intercultural competence. Intercultural competence occurs when the avowed identity matches the identity ascribed.

> For example, if you avow the identity for an assertive, outspoken U.S. American and your conversational partner avows himself or herself to be a respectful, nonassertive Vietnamese, then each must ascribe the corresponding identity to the conversational partner. You must jointly negotiate what kind of relationship will be mutually satisfying. Some degree of adjustment and accommodation is usually necessary.[80]

Collier is saying that in order to communicate effectively in an intercultural situation, an individual's avowed cultural identity and communication style should match the identity and style ascribed to him or her by the other party. But since the communication styles are likely to be different, the participants will have to search for a middle ground, and this search will require flexibility and adaptation. As a simple illustration, the Japanese traditionally greet and say goodbye to each other by bowing. However, in Japanese/U.S. business meetings, the Japanese have learned to bow only slightly while shaking hands. In doing this, they are adjusting their normal greeting practice to accommodate those individuals from the United States. Longtime U.S. business representatives to Japan have learned to emulate this behavior. Thus, a mutually satisfying social protocol has evolved. In achieving this, the participants have demonstrated the principal components of intercultural communication competence: motivation, knowledge, and skills.

Identity in a Multicultural Society

There is no denying that modern society is creating more multicultural social groupings. In subsequent chapters, we will talk about how global business is now being conducted in a transnational environment, cross-cultural health care is a growing field, and multicultural education is gaining importance. We will illustrate the fact that forces such as globalization, immigration, and intercultural marriage are bringing about an increased mixing of cultures, and this mixing is producing people who possess multiple cultural identities. Chuang notes that "cultural identity becomes blurry in the midst of cultural integration, bicultural interactions, interracial marriages, and the mutual adaptation processes."[81] Martin, Nakayama, and Flores further support this idea by reporting that "increasing numbers of people are living 'in between' cultural identities. That is, they identify with more than one ethnicity, race, or religion."[82] To explore this further, we will look at the change in attitude toward identity in international adoption, the growth phenomenon of "ethnic shopping," and the rise of what are called "intercultural transients."

In the past, it was not uncommon for children of international adoption to be raised by their United States families with little or no appreciation of the culture of their native land.[85] This was evident in the 2002 Academy Award–nominated documentary *Daughter from Danang*, which related the trials of a mixed Vietnamese and American woman who returned to Vietnam in search of her identity after twenty-two years in the United States.[86] She was driven by a desire to find out more about her birth family and herself, but because she had never been exposed to the Vietnamese culture, the reunion ended in disaster. The potential for such unfortunate meetings should be reduced in the future, because a greater awareness of the importance of cultural identity is moving many parents to recognize and promote the cultural traditions of their adopted children.[87]

Immigration, intercultural marriage, and multiracial births are creating a social environment where many United States youths consider cultural diversity as a normal part of social life.[88] Kotkin and Tseng contend that in the United States there is "not only a growing willingness—and ability—to cross cultures, but also the evolution of a nation in which personal identity is shaped more by cultural preferences than by skin color or ethnic heritage."[89] Hitt points out that sociologists call this evolving trend "ethnic shifting" or "ethnic shopping," and that "more and more Americans have come to feel comfortable changing out of the identities they were born into and donning new ethnicities in which they feel more at home."[90] To illustrate this bending of ethnic identities, he relates that the 2004 Irish-Canadian parade queen in Montreal was half Irish and half Nigerian.[91] The Internet has afforded people an opportunity to conduct in-depth genealogical research, and one result is a growing number of U.S. Americans who now consider themselves American Indians.[92] According to Wynter, the

CONSIDER THIS

Between 1990 and 2006, international adoptions in the United States increased from 7,093 to 20,679, peaking at 22,884 in 2004.[83] According to an MSNBC report, "Stanford University sociologist Michael Rosenfeld calculates that more than 7 percent of America's 59 million married couples in 2005 were interracial, compared to less than 2 percent in 1970."[84]

blurring of racial and ethnic boundaries has also been promoted by U.S. corporations.[93] This can be seen in many entertainment genres, such as hip-hop, country and western, and alternative music, which enjoy fans from every ethnic category. Products, especially clothes, endorsed by prominent sports figures are worn by members of all cultural groups. United States sports fans identify with team members from China, Cuba, the Caribbean, Latin America, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, and many other nations, as well as those from a variety of U.S. ethnic groups.

The global marketplace is giving rise to what Onwumechili and his colleagues have termed "intercultural transients." These are "travelers who regularly alternate residence between their homeland and a host foreign country,"[94] and must manage frequent cultural changes and identity renegotiations.[95] Over the past decade, a growing number of nations have made dual citizenship available, which has added to the number of intercultural transients. Carlos Ghosn serves as a model example of an intercultural transient. Ghosn was born in Brazil, attended schools in Lebanon and France, and speaks five languages. A citizen of Lebanon, he is the CEO of both Nissan (a Japan-based company) and CEO of Renault (a French firm), positions he holds concurrently.[96] To fulfill his responsibilities, Ghosn has to divide his time between Japan, France, and the United States, and must adjust to the intricacies of each culture. As transportation technology continues to make access to distant lands easier, the ranks of intercultural transients will expand.

Issues of identity can be expected to remain complex—and perhaps become more so—as multiculturalism increasingly characterizes contemporary society. It is clear, however, that the old understanding of a fixed cultural identity or ethnicity is outdated, and identity is rapidly becoming more of an "articulated negotiation between what you call yourself and what other people are willing to call you."[97] But regardless of what form they may take or how they are achieved, your identities will remain a consequence of culture.[98]

The Dark Side of Identity

By now, you should have a good idea of what identity is and how it can influence your intercultural communication interactions. It should be equally clear that fundamentally, identity is about similarities and differences.[99] In other words, we identify with something as a result of preference, understanding, familiarity, or socialization. You may prefer hip-hop style instead of cowboy boots and jeans. You may understand American football better than cricket, and you may be more familiar with hamburgers and French fries than with bratwurst and sauerkraut. You will likely have greater tolerance toward those people and things you prefer, understand, and find familiar.

Similarities and differences also play a critical role in social relations. "Psychologists conducting research in the area of interpersonal attraction have established an important principle: the more similar two people are to each other, the more likely they are to like one another."[100] But by definition, intercultural communication involves people from dissimilar cultures, and this makes difference a normative condition. Thus our reaction to, and ability to manage, those differences is key to successful intercultural interactions. Our preference for things we understand and are familiar with can adversely influence our perception of and attitude toward new and different people and things. This can lead to stereotyping, prejudice, racism, and ethnocentrism.

Stereotyping

When confronted with a lack of familiarity or similarity, we often tend to stereotype. Because we meet so many strangers and are often faced with unusual circumstances, stereotyping is a common occurrence. Thus, stereotyping can be a natural way of dealing with the unknown. The problem arises when we are unable to recognize that we may hold negative stereotypes.

Stereotypes Defined

Stereotyping is a complex form of categorization that mentally organizes your experiences with, and guides your behavior toward, a particular group of people. It becomes a means of organizing your images into fixed and simple categories that you use to represent an entire collection of people.[101] Psychologists Abbate, Boca, and Bocchiaro offer a more formal definition: "A stereotype is a cognitive structure containing the perceiver's knowledge, beliefs, and expectancies about some human social groups."[102] The reason for the pervasive nature of stereotypes is that human beings have a psychological need to categorize and classify. The world you live in is too big, too complex, and too dynamic for you to know it in all its detail. Hence, you want to classify and pigeonhole. The main problem is not in the pigeonholing or categorizing, but rather "the difficulty lies with the overgeneralization and the often negative evaluations (attitudes and prejudices) that are directed toward members of the categories."[103]

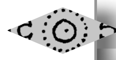
Stereotypes can be positive or negative. Stereotypes that refer to a large group of people as lazy, coarse, vicious, or moronic are obviously negative. There are, of course, positive stereotypes, such as the assumption that Asian students are hardworking, well mannered, and intelligent. However, because stereotypes (as the word is currently defined) narrow our perceptions, they usually jeopardize intercultural communication and take on a negative tone. This is because stereotypes tend to overgeneralize the characteristics of a group of people. For example, we know that not *all* Asian students are hardworking and intelligent, and that there is no large group of people in which everyone is lazy.

Learning Stereotypes

Stereotypes are everywhere and they seem to endure. Why? Perhaps one way to understand the power and lasting impact of stereotypes is to examine how they are acquired. Remember, you are not born with stereotypes; they are learned. And like culture, they are learned in a variety of ways. The most obvious, and perhaps most important, agent of stereotypes is the socialization process, which begins with our parents. While many parents might try to avoid teaching their children to think in stereotypes, we tend to agree with Schneider when he notes that many parents directly or indirectly promote them.[104] Children who hear their parents say, "All those homeless people are just too lazy to find a job" are learning stereotypes. Once children enter school, peers become an important carrier of stereotypes. Of course, the socialization process continues as children become a members of various religious and social groups. These groups, while teaching the virtues of a particular point of view, might also intentionally or unintentionally teach stereotypes about an opposite view. For example, by learning one particular

view of religion and at the same time hearing of the "evils of religious terrorists," children might be acquiring stereotypes about Muslims.

Many stereotypes are provided by the mass media and widely disseminated through a variety of media forms such as advertisements, movies, and TV sitcoms and soap operas. Television has been guilty of providing distorted images of many ethnic groups, the elderly, and gay people. Media has also played a role in perpetuating certain stereotyped perceptions of women and men. Wood offers an excellent summary of television's portrayal of men and women when she writes, "Media most often represents boys and men as active, adventurous, powerful, sexually aggressive, and largely uninvolved in human relationships, and represents girls and women as young, thin, beautiful, passive, dependent, and often incompetent.[105]

IMAGINE THIS 

You have just reviewed the concept for a new TV sitcom. The story is about a brother and sister who live with their father, a widowed Wall Street investment banker, in a co-op on Central Park in New York City. The story is about how the brother and sister deal with their father's many girlfriends, who are all young white fashion models. The family is white but has a Puerto Rican housekeeper, and the co-op doorman is an African American, who is often called on to help the brother and sister. There are no other cast members.

What is wrong with this sitcom concept?

Finally, stereotypes may evolve out of fear of persons from groups that differ from one's own. For example, many people view a person with a mental illness as someone who is prone to violence. This conflicts with statistical data, which indicates that people with mental illnesses tend to be only as prone to violence as the general population. Yet because of well-publicized isolated cases of mentally ill persons killing other people, the stereotype is the rule instead of the exception. This is how many stereotypes develop in the first place: a series of isolated behaviors by a member of a group unfairly engenders a generalized perception that represents all members of the group.

Stereotypes and Intercultural Communication

As we have pointed out, in most instances stereotypes are the products of limited, lazy, and misguided perceptions. The problems created by these misperceptions are both serious and numerous.[106] Adler reminds us of the harmful effect stereotypes have on intercultural communication when she notes:

> Stereotypes become counterproductive when we place people in the wrong groups, when we incorrectly describe the group norm, when we evaluate the group rather than simply describing it, when we confuse the stereotype with the description of a particular individual, and when we fail to modify the stereotype based on our actual observations and experience.[107]

Let us look at four additional reasons why stereotypes hamper intercultural communication. First, stereotypes are a kind of filter; they only allow in information that is consis-

IMAGINE THIS

- *White men can't dance.*
- *All African Americans are good basketball players.*
- *Mexicans are never on time because they are lazy.*
- *Polish people have strange names.*
- *Jews like to study a lot.*

In the above examples, identify which stereotypes are positive and which are negative.

tent with information already held by the individual. In this way, what might be the truth is never given a chance. For example, women were stereotyped for many years as a rather one-dimensional group. The stereotype of women as homemakers often keeps women from advancing in the workplace. Second, it is not the act of classifying that creates intercultural problems; rather, it is assuming that all culture-specific information applies to all individuals from a particular cultural group.[108] Stereotypes assume that all members of a group have exactly the same traits. As Atkinson, Morten, and Sue note, "They are rigid preconceptions which are applied to all members of a group or to an individual over a period of time, regardless of individual variations."[109] Third, stereotypes also keep you from being successful as communicators because they are oversimplified, exaggerated, and overgeneralized. They distort because they are based on half-truths and often-untrue premises and assumptions. Guirdham reaffirms this important point when he reminds us that stereotypes alter intergroup communication because they lead people to base their messages, their way of transmitting them, and their reception of them on false assumptions.[110] Fourth, stereotypes are resistant to change. Because stereotypes are usually developed early in life and are repeated and reinforced by the in-group, they grow in intensity each passing year. In fact, contact between in-groups and out-groups often only buttresses the stereotype. As Meshel and McGlynn point out, "Once formed, stereotypes are resistant to change, and direct contact often strengthens the pre-existing associations between the target group and the stereotypical properties."[111]

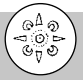
Avoiding Stereotypes

Because culture and stereotypes are both learned early in life, we recommend that the first stages of avoiding stereotypes begin in childhood. There is ample evidence that children who have positive face-to-face contact with other groups hold fewer negative stereotypes than those who are denied such contact.[112] In fact, research suggests that most positive contact can diminish many of the effects of stereotyping.[113] The assumption is that stereotypes can change when members of different groups increase their interaction with each other. Through this interaction, fictitious and negative stereotypes can be proven false.

To assess the stereotypes you currently hold, ask yourself some of the following questions:

- Who is the target of my stereotype?
- What is the content of my stereotype?

- Why do I believe the stereotype is accurate?
- What is the source of my stereotype?
- How much actual contact do I have with the target of the stereotype?



Prejudice occurs when a person holds a generalization about a group of people or things, often based on little or no factual experience. Prejudice can be positive (liking a certain group or thing) or negative (disliking a certain group or thing).

Another effective method trying to control stereotypes is advanced by Ting-Toomey and Chung, who ask you "to learn to distinguish between inflexible stereotyping and flexible stereotyping."[114] As the word would indicate, inflexible stereotyping is rigid, intransigent, and occurs almost automatically. Because these stereotypes are so deeply entrenched, you refuse to accept perceptions that run counter to the stereotype. When you try to engage in flexible stereotyping, you begin by being aware of your tendency to engage in categorization. The two most important aspects of being flexible are "being open to new information and evidence" and "being aware of your own zone of discomfort."[115]

Prejudice

In the broadest sense, prejudices are deeply held negative feelings associated with a particular group. These sentiments often include anger, fear, aversion, and anxiety. Macionis offers a detailed definition of prejudice:

> Prejudice amounts to a rigid and irrational generalization about a category of people. Prejudice is irrational to the extent that people hold inflexible attitudes supported by little or no direct evidence. Prejudice may target people of a particular social class, sex, sexual orientation, age, political affiliation, race, or ethnicity.[116]

In a communication setting, according to Ruscher, the negative feelings and attitudes held by those who are prejudiced are often exhibited through the use of group labels, hostile humor, or speech that alleges the superiority of one group over another.[117] As you can see, hostility toward others is an integral part of prejudice.

As was the case with stereotypes, beliefs linked to prejudices have certain characteristics. First, they are directed at a social group and its members. Often those groups are marked by race, ethnicity, gender, age, and the like. Second, prejudices involve an evaluative dimension. According to Brislin, prejudices deal with "feelings about what is good and bad, right and wrong, moral and immoral and so forth."[118] These either/or feelings often cause discussions of prejudiced attitudes to turn into heated debates. Third, they possess centrality, which refers "to the extent to which a belief is important to an individual's attitude about others."[119] As you would suspect, the less intense the belief, the more success you will have in changing your prejudices or those of other people.

Functions of Prejudice

Prejudices, like stereotypes, are learned and serve a variety of functions for the people who hold them. For example, for some people prejudices offer rewards ranging from feelings

of superiority to feelings of power. Let us spend a moment looking at four of the most common functions prejudices fulfill.[120]

EGO-DEFENSIVE FUNCTION

The *ego-defensive function* of prejudice allows people to hold a prejudice without having to admit they possess such beliefs about a member of an out-group. An example of this type of prejudice might be found in someone who says, "My history grades are low this semester because the professor feels sorry for the minority students and is giving them the higher grades." These types of remarks permit persons who utter them to articulate prejudicial statements while maintaining a sense of self instead of truly examining why their grades were low.

UTILITARIAN FUNCTION

The *utilitarian function* of prejudice allows people to believe that they are receiving rewards by holding on to their prejudicial beliefs. The most vivid examples of this function are found in attitudes related to the economic arena. People often find it very useful, and to their economic advantage, to say, "Those immigrants have so little education that they are lucky to have the jobs we offer them." This sort of sentence reflects utilitarian prejudice because the holder of the prejudice can use the belief as a justification for offering minimal pay to the workers in question.

VALUE-EXPRESSIVE FUNCTION

We see people maintaining the *value-expressive function* of prejudice when they believe their attitudes are expressing the highest and most moral values of the culture. These usually revolve around values related to religion, government, and politics. Persons who believe their God is the one and only true God are being prejudicial against people who hold different views.

KNOWLEDGE FUNCTION

When carrying out the *knowledge function* of prejudice, persons are able to categorize, organize, and construct their perceptions of other people in a manner that makes sense to them—even if the sense-making is not accurate. In this way, the world is easy to deal with in that people are not perceived individually but rather as members of a group. It is the knowledge function that produces an abundance of labels. People are seen not as individuals with a variety of characteristics, but rather as "Jews," "Mexicans," "gays," or "feminists," and these labels deny the existence of the person's unique characteristics.

Expressions of Prejudice

Prejudice is expressed in a variety of ways—at times subtle and indirect but on other occasions overt and direct. Over fifty years ago, Allport's research revealed five expressions of prejudice.[121] They remain relevant today and many contemporary social scientists continue to base their theories on Allport's work.[122]

First, prejudice can be expressed through what Allport refers to as *antilocution*, which involves talking about a member of the target group in negative and stereotypic terms. People would be engaging in this form of prejudice if they told a friend, "You can never trust anyone who has been a member of the Communist Party." Another example of antilocution prejudice is the statement, "Don't pay those immigrants very much. They don't have any education and will only waste the money."

Second, people act out prejudice when they *avoid and/or withdraw* from contact with the disliked group. The problems associated with this form of prejudice are obvious. How do you interact, solve problems, and resolve serious conflicts when you are separated from other people? On both the international and domestic levels, avoidance and withdrawal have often characterized an intercultural exchange. History is full of examples of how one nation or group of people refused to attend or withdrew from an important peace conference. For decades, the political leaders of Israel and Egypt rebuffed each other, only to discover much later that talking benefited both parties. After more than fifty years of hostility, North and South Korea are now engaged in a dialogue designed to improve relations. What is true with regard to governments is also characteristic of individual behavior. Have there been occasions when you, like governments, withdrew from communication because a person was a different color or spoke a different language?

Third, when *discrimination* is the expression of prejudice, the prejudiced person will attempt to exclude all members of the group in question from certain types of employment, residential housing, political rights, educational and recreational opportunities, churches, hospitals, or other types of social institutions. Often in cases of discrimination, we observe ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and prejudice coming together in a type of fanaticism that completely obstructs any form of successful intercultural communication. When discrimination replaces communication, you see overt and covert expressions of anger and hate that restrict one group's opportunity or access to opportunities that rightly belong to everyone. When a real estate agent will not show certain homes to African Americans, there is discrimination. When businesses promote less qualified men instead of competent women, you have discrimination.

Fourth, when prejudice moves to the next level of expression, you often see *physical attacks*. This form of prejudice often accelerates in hostility and intensity if left unchecked. From the burning of churches to the writing of anti-Semitic slogans in Jewish cemeteries to attacks on gays, physical acts occur when minorities are the targets of prejudiced activity.

The fifth, and most alarming, form of prejudice is *extermination*. This expression of prejudice leads to acts of physical violence against the out-group. History is replete with examples of lynching, massacres, and programs of genocide. In cases such as Hitler's "master plan," the "killing fields" of Cambodia, the former Serbian "ethnic cleansing," tribal warfare in Kenya, and the religious conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, you see attempts to destroy an entire racial or ethnic group.

Causes of Prejudice

There are no simple explanations for the causes of prejudice, which in most instances are multiple. Experts have isolated a few of the root motivations of prejudice, and we will look at some of these in order to better understand how prejudice can be a major deterrent to successful intercultural interaction.

SOCIETAL SOURCES

A great deal of prejudice is built into the major organizations and institutions of a society. According to Oskamp, these organizations produce laws, regulations, and norms that create prejudice within a society. These laws and regulations help "maintain the power of the dominant groups over subordinate ones."[123]

MAINTAINING SOCIAL IDENTITY

At the beginning of this chapter, when we discussed identity, you will recall that we pointed out how important people's identities are for connecting them to their culture. This connection is a very personal and emotional one. It creates a bond between individuals and their culture. Anything that threatens that bond, such as members of the out-group, can become the target of prejudice.

SCAPEGOATING

Scapegoating occurs when a particular group of people, usually a minority, are singled out to bear the blame for certain events or circumstances, such as economic or social hardships, that adversely affect the dominant group. The role of scapegoating, and its link to prejudice, is made clear by Kaplan when he notes how scapegoating allows members of the in-group to act out their frustrations and hostilities by being prejudiced against the out-group.[124] Scapegoating generates arguments and justifications based on fear and imagined threats posed by the out-group. According to Stephan and Stephan, these assumed, unsubstantiated threats can be political, economic, or social concerns believed to threaten "the physical or material well being of the in-group or its members."[125] Throughout history, black people, Jews, immigrants, gay people, and other minority groups have frequently been used as scapegoats.

Avoiding Prejudice

Avoiding prejudice is not an easy assignment because like most aspects of cultural perception, racial and cultural prejudices are learned early and are reinforced through continued exposure. Nevertheless, research has revealed that two techniques are often successful in dispelling prejudicial views: personal contact[126] and education.[127] The research on the value of personal contact as a method of reducing prejudice has a history dating to the early 1950s. The rationale for personal contact, at least in its expression, is a simple one: the greater the frequency of positive contacts between in-group and out-group individuals, the lower the level of perceived prejudice. According to Oskamp, the contact needs to meet certain conditions to be successful, the most important being "equal status between groups" and cooperation "toward common goals."[128]

There are two types of educational programs that psychologists have used to help reduce prejudice. The first type centers on what are called *multicultural education curricula*. According to Stephan and Stephan, these curricula "usually [consist] of materials on the history and cultural practices of a wide array of racial and ethnic groups."[129] The materials in multicultural curricula are often presented from the point of view of the minority groups rather than from the perception of the dominant culture. The second type, *cultural diversity training*, is used mainly in business and organizational settings and

consists of programs designed "to teach managers and employees to value group differences, increase understanding between groups, and help individuals recognize that their own behavior is affected by their background."[130] Regardless of the program selected, the explicit goals remain the same—to increase intergroup dialogue and reduce prejudice.

RACISM

As we step fully into the twenty-first century, it appears that for most people of color Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream that children "will be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character" remains a dream, because, as Vora and Vora point out, "Both blatant and very subtle forms of racism permeate organizational and personal levels of our society, from governmental, business, and educational institutions to our everyday interactions."[131] Racist acts in these institutions, and in society in general, target many groups and for a host of reasons. As Gold notes, "Forms of racism are experienced by groups such as Asian Americans, Latinos, Arabs, and American Indians, whose racialization is associated with factors such as religion, foreignness, clothing, culture, citizenship, gender and language."[132] Racism is not only a problem in the United States. Many studies point out that racism is on the rise throughout the world.[133] Although racism exists for many reasons, experts seem to agree that at its core racism is driven by "culture, economics, psychology and history."[134]

It is difficult to make a complete assessment of the consequences of racism because the effects are both conscious and subconscious. What we do know is that racism is damaging to those who are the recipients of this destructive behavior as well as to the racists themselves. It devalues the target person by denying his or her identity, and it destroys the culture by creating divisions and making it less cohesive. As Leone notes, racism results "in the virtual isolation of a specific group or groups from the political, social and economic mainstream of a nation's life."[135]

What is sad but true about racism is that it seems to have been present throughout the world for thousands of years. History is full of examples. In the recent past we saw African Americans being forced to ride in the back of buses, Jews being required to wear a yellow Star of David, Japanese Americans being isolated in camps during the Second World War, American Indians having their land confiscated, and South African society divided along racial lines. Today we see manifestations of racism in the form of racially offensive graffiti, property damage, intimidation, and even physical violence. People also practice more subtle forms of racism, such as uttering racial slurs or telling ethnic jokes. We will examine this harmful and insidious characteristic of racism so that you can work to eliminate it in your professional and private lives.

Racism Defined

Racism, in many ways, is an extension of stereotyping and prejudice, as you can see in the following definition advanced by Leone:

> Racism is the belief in the inherent superiority of a particular race. It denies the basic equality of humankind and correlates ability with physical composition. Thus, it assumes that success or failure in any societal endeavor will depend upon genetic endowment rather than environment and access to opportunity.[136]

REMEMBER THIS

Racism occurs when persons believe their race is inherently superior to another race. Racist individuals will often engage in discrimination against people of one or more other races.

It is important to notice the word "superiority" in this definition. It is this idea of superiority that allows one group of people to mistreat another group on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, or sexual preference. The folly of racist thinking is that it is not only unethical and cruel, but it is also constructed on false premises. It is now common knowledge, for those who are willing to be receptive to the knowledge, that "the big differences among human groups are the result of culture, not biological inheritance or race. All human beings belong to the same species and the biological features essential to human life are common to us all."[137] Yet in spite of this truth and wisdom, racism remains a major hindrance to successful intercultural communication.

Expressions of Racism

As already mentioned, racism can be expressed in a variety of forms. Some of these are almost impossible to detect, while others are blatant and transparent. In general, these forms can be categorized as either personal or institutional. "Personal racism consists of racist acts, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors on the part of the individual persons."[138] Referring to institutional racism, Bloom is very specific when he writes, "Institutional racism refers to racial inferiorizing or antipathy perpetrated by specific social institutions such as schools, corporations, hospitals, or the criminal justice system as a totality."[139] While "institutional racism may be intentional or unintentional,"[140] its consequences have a detrimental effect on specific groups and society as a whole.

Avoiding Racism

Although views about race are deeply entrenched, there are four steps you can take to reduce racism in yourself and others. First, *try to be honest* with yourself when deciding if you hold some racist views. It is a simple point to state, but a difficult one to accomplish. Yet, confronting your racist views, if you hold any, is an important first step. Second, *object to racist jokes and insults* whenever you hear them. This daring and sometimes courageous act will send a message to other people that you denounce racism in whatever form it may take. Third, as straightforward as it sounds, we urge you to *respect freedom*. The United States Constitution states, "nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." From this declaration, it follows that to preserve liberty you must work to see that all individuals are free from political and social restrictions. Fourth, examine the *historical roots of racism*. The rationale for such an examination is clearly documented by Solomos and Back when they note that before the full impact of racism can be grasped and challenged, one must be able to understand and explain "both the roots of contemporary racist ideas and movements and the sources of their current appeal."[141]

Robert Fonseca

Ethnocentrism is learned early in life and is continuously reinforced.

We conclude by reminding you that racism, stereotyping, and prejudice are pervasive because they are often learned early in life, and like much of culture, become part of our way of seeing the world. The African-American author Maya Angelou makes this same point when she writes, "The plague of racism is insidious, entering into our minds as smoothly and quietly and invisibly as floating airborne microbes enter into our bodies to find lifelong purchase in our bloodstreams."[142]

ETHNOCENTRISM

People from one culture might view people who eat raw horsemeat as being barbarous and abnormal. But the people who eat raw horsemeat might consider people in other cultures as cruel and uncaring because they commonly assign the elderly to convalescent homes. Both ways of thinking demonstrate an ethnocentric attitude. At the core of ethnocentrism are judgments about what is right, moral, and rational. These judgments pervade every aspect of a culture's existence. Examples range from the insignificant ("Earrings should be placed in the earlobes, not in the nose") to the significant ("We should enact trade quotas to protect U.S. jobs from cheap foreign imports"). What you see here is the very natural tendency to use one's own culture as a starting point when evaluating the behavior of other people and cultures.

Defining Ethnocentrism

Nanda and Warms provide a contemporary explanation of ethnocentrism:

> Ethnocentrism is the notion that one's own culture is superior to any other. It is the idea that other cultures should be measured by the degree to which they live up to our cultural

standards. We are ethnocentric when we view other cultures through the narrow lens of our own culture or social position.[143]

It is this "narrow lens" that links ethnocentrism to the concepts of stereotyping, prejudice, and racism that we just finished discussing.

Characteristics of Ethnocentrism

LEVELS OF ETHNOCENTRISM

Ethnocentrism can be viewed as having three levels: *positive*, *negative*, and *extremely negative*. The first, *positive*, is the belief that, at least for you, your culture is preferred over all others. This is natural, and inherently there is nothing wrong with it because you draw much of your personal identity and many of your beliefs from your native culture. At the *negative* level, you partially take on an evaluative dimension. You believe your culture is the center of everything and all other cultures should be measured and rated by its standards. As Triandis notes, "We perceive in-group customs as universally valid. We unquestionably think that in-group roles and values are correct."[144] Finally, in the *extreme negative* form, it is not enough to consider your culture as the most valid and useful; you also perceive your culture to be the most powerful one, and even believe that your values and beliefs should be adopted by other cultures.

ETHNOCENTRISM IS UNIVERSAL

Anthropologists generally agree that "most people are ethnocentric" and that "some ethnocentrism seems necessary as a kind of glue to hold a society together."[145] Like culture, ethnocentrism is usually learned at the unconscious level. For example, schools that teach mainly the history, geography, literature, language, and government of their own country and exclude those of others are encouraging ethnocentrism. When your history books contain only the accomplishments of white males, you are quietly learning ethnocentrism. Students exposed to limited orientations develop the belief that America is the center of the world, and they learn to judge the world by American standards. What is true about American ethnocentrism is true about other cultures. When children in Iran learn only about the wisdom of Allah, they are learning to judge all religious truths by this singular standard. And when the Chinese, as they have done for thousands of years, refer to their country using ideograms meaning "Central Kingdom," they are teaching ethnocentrism. Even the stories and folktales that each culture tells its young people contribute to ethnocentrism. Keesing described this subtle teaching when he writes, "Nearly always the folklore of a people includes myths of origin which give priority to themselves, and place the stamp of supernatural approval upon their particular customs."[146]

ETHNOCENTRISM CONTRIBUTES TO CULTURAL IDENTITY

Another reason ethnocentrism is so pervasive is that it provides members of a culture with feelings of identity and belonging. As Rusen notes, "Belonging to this group, to this nation, or civilization, gives them self-esteem, makes them proud of the achievements of their own people."[147] The manner in which this idea translates into ethnocentrism

is clearly articulated by Scarborough: "People have great pride in their culture; they must, because culture is their source of identity; they have difficulty understanding why others do not behave as they do, and assume that others would like to be them if they could."[148] Haviland and his colleagues echo this same important function when they write:

> To function effectively, we may expect a society to embrace at least a degree of ethnic pride and a loyalty to its unique cultural traditions, from which its people derive psychological support and a firm social bond to their group. In societies where one's self-identification derives from the group, ethnocentrism is essential to a sense of personal worth.[149]

Ethnocentrism is strongest in moral and religious contexts, where emotionalism may overshadow rationality and cause the type of hostility the world witnessed on September 11, 2001. Explaining the link between ethnocentrism and devotion to one's culture, Brislin observes, "If people view their own group as central to their lives and as possessing proper behavioral standards, they are likely to aid their group members when troubles arise. In times of war the rallying of ethnocentric feelings makes a country's military forces more dedicated to the defeat of the (inferior) enemy."[150]

There can be serious consequences if you engage in negative ethnocentrism at the same time as you are trying to practice successful intercultural communication. One of the major interpersonal consequences of ethnocentrism is anxiety. The argument is simple and is clearly enunciated by Gamble and Gamble: "The more ethnocentric you are, the more anxious you are about interacting with other cultures; when we are fearful, we are less likely to expect a positive outcome from such interactions, and less willing to trust someone from another culture."[151]

Avoiding Ethnocentrism

Avoiding ethnocentric perceptions and behavior is not an easy task. There are, however, some suggestions that we can offer that might help reduce the negative consequences of ethnocentrism. First, try to avoid dogmatism. You can begin by asking yourself to think about the following questions:

- Jews cover their heads when they pray, but Protestants do not. Is one practice more correct than the other?
- Catholics have one God, Buddhists have no god, and Hindus have many gods. Is one belief more correct than the others?
- In parts of Iran and Saudi Arabia, women cover their faces with veils, whereas women in the United States do not. Is one behavior more correct than the other?
- In China, people eat with chopsticks, while in the United States they use metal or plastic utensils. Is one method more correct than the other?

These sorts of rhetorical questions are limitless. We urge you to remember that it is not the questions that are important but rather the dogmatic manner in which people often answer them. The danger of ethnocentrism is that it is strongest in political, moral, and religious settings. In these contexts, it is easy to let culturally restricted views overshadow rationality. Hence, we again urge you to be alert to narrowness and intolerance in any form. St. Thomas Aquinas said much the same thing hundreds of years ago: "Beware of the man of one book."

Second, learn to be open to new views. Triandis converts this important idea into action when he writes, “When we make a comparative judgment that our culture is in some ways better than another, we need to learn to follow this judgment with two questions: Is that really true? What is the objective evidence?”[152] One of the main missions of this book is to expose you to a variety of cultures so that you might be able to carry out the advice of Triandis by knowing the “truth” about other cultures. This lack of knowledge is a major cause of ethnocentrism.

SUMMARY

- There are many reasons behind the need to understand identity, including personal and psychological well-being. Identity is also a focal point of intercultural communication, which is becoming increasingly important as a result of both globalization and domestic diversity within the United States.
- Identity is a highly abstract, dynamic, multifaceted concept that defines who you are. Turner places identities into three general categories: human, social, and personal. Hall uses three similar categories: personal, relational, and communal.
- Every individual has multiple identities—racial, ethnic, gender, national, regional, organizational, personal, and perhaps cyber/fantasy—that act in concert. The importance of any single identity is a result of the situation.
- Identity is acquired through interaction with other members of one’s cultural group. The family exerts a primary influence on early identity formation. Identity development models have been constructed by Phinney and by Martin and Nakayama.
- Identities are established through group membership and are enacted in a variety of ways, including rites of passage, personal appearance, and participation in commemorative events. Concepts of identity within the same group can change over time.
- Identity plays a critical role in intercultural communication. Competent intercultural communication is achieved when the participants find commonality in ascribed and avowed identities.
- As society becomes increasingly multicultural, new concepts of cultural identity are evolving.
- Stereotyping occurs when persons categorize experiences about another group of people and let those categorizations guide their behavior. Stereotypes refer to the behavioral norm of the whole group of people, not individual persons.
- A prejudice is a strong feeling or attitude toward a particular social group or thing.
- Racist persons believe that their race is superior to another race of people.
- Ethnocentrism occurs when persons believe their culture is superior to other cultures.

ACTIVITIES

1. Construct a list of as many of your identities as you can. Using the list, draw a pie chart with each identity receiving space proportional to that identity's importance to you. Compare your chart with other classmates' charts.
2. Select an ethnicity other than your own and try to answer the five questions from page 172 and 173.[153]
3. Working with some members of your class, try to list some examples of what you believe to be examples of American ethnocentrism.
4. What is the relationship among stereotypes, prejudice, racism, and ethnocentrism?
5. Can you think of some intercultural communication problems that were not discussed in this chapter?

DISCUSSION IDEAS

1. Why is an awareness of identity important in your personal life? What are some of the situations in which this awareness would be beneficial?
2. How would you define identity? How would you explain your identities to another person?
3. What are some of your different identities and how did you acquire them? What are some differences between your identities and the same identities in another culture?
4. How did you establish some of your identities? How do you enact those identities?
5. Discuss the following statement: "Prejudice can never be eliminated because it is so deeply rooted in human nature."

CHAPTER 5

Shaping Interpretations of Reality: Cultural Values

Your beliefs become your thoughts. Your thoughts become your words. Your words become your actions. Your actions become your habits. Your habits become your values. Your values become your destiny.

MAHATMA GANDHI

On a group of theories one can found a school; but on a group of values one can found a culture, a civilization, a new way of living together among men.

IGNAZIO SILONE

Previous chapters have provided you with an understanding of the basic components of communication and culture, explained some of the different ways you acquire your culture, and examined many of the factors that contribute to how members of a culture see the world. By now, you should have an appreciation of how extensively your daily life is guided by culture. Factors such as family, history, religion, and cultural identity influence your decisions as to what you think about and how you should act. An influential factor may affect something as mundane as what you consider an appropriate snack: a bag of chips, a dish of hummus, or a ball of rice wrapped in seaweed. It also may influence something as complex as how you view issues such as school prayer, capital punishment, and abortion rights in the United States or human rights in China. What you think and how you react to events is based in part on your perceptions of the world, as well as the beliefs and values that have been instilled in you by your culture. However, external factors beyond the pale of culture such as the death of a love one, etc., can affect your beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions as well.

Perception

To steer your attention toward the topic of perception, we will begin with a few questions. The moon is a rocky, arid physical sphere that orbits the earth; yet, when looking at this object, many Americans often visualize a human face; many American Indians,

as well as Japanese, perceive a rabbit; Chinese claim to see a lady fleeing her husband; and Samoans report a woman weaving. Why? In Japan and China, people fear the number four; in the United States, it is the number thirteen. For Americans, a "V" sign made with two fingers usually represents victory or peace. Japanese high school students see it as a sign of happiness or good luck. But when given with the palm facing inward, Australians and the British equate the gesture with a rude American sign usually made with the middle finger. Why? Most Asians respond negatively to white flowers because white is associated with death. For Peruvians, Iranians, and Mexicans, yellow flowers often invoke the same reaction. Why?[1] In all these examples, the external objects (moon, hands, flowers) were the same, yet the responses were different. The reason is perception—how diverse cultures have taught their members to look at the world in different ways. To this end we will (1) define perception, (2) link perception to culture, (3) briefly discuss beliefs and values, and (4) look at how cultural differences in perception influence intercultural communication.

What is Perception?

Perception is the means by which you make sense of your physical and social world. As the German novelist Hermann Hesse wrote, "There is no reality except the one contained within us"—and we will add that that reality has been placed in you, in part, by your culture. The world inside of you "includes symbols, things, people, ideas, events, ideologies, and even faith."[2] Your perceptions give meaning to external forces by allowing you to interpret, categorize, and organize those stimuli that you choose to monitor. As Gamble and Gamble state, "Perception is the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting sensory data in a way that enables us to make sense of our world." [3] In other words, perception is the process whereby people convert external events and experiences into meaningful internal understanding. According to Singer, "We experience everything

Photodisc/Getty Images

Your perceptions of and responses to external events are in part determined by your culture.

CONSIDER THIS

It has been said that "Perception is reality." How would you explain this statement? Do you agree or disagree with the statement? Why?

in the world not as it is—but only as the world comes to us through our sensory receptors," and this includes how you cognitively process the stimuli.[4] Although the physical dimension is an important phase of perception, you must realize that the psychological aspects of perception are what help you understand intercultural communication.

Perception and Culture

Whether you feel delighted or ill at the thought of eating the flesh of a cow, pig, fish, dog, or snake depends on what your culture has taught you about food. Whether you are repulsed by the sight of a bull being jabbed with short, barbed steel spears and long sharp swords, consider it a traditional sport, or see it as dramatic art depends on your enculturation. As we pointed out in Chapter 1, by exposing a large collection of people to similar experiences, culture generates similar meanings and similar behaviors. This does not mean, of course, that everyone in a particular culture will see something in exactly the same way, as we discuss in a later section of this chapter.

An example of how culture affects perception and communication is found in a classic study by Bagby. Mexican children from a rural area and children from the dominant culture in the United States viewed, for a split second, a stereogram in which one eye was exposed to a baseball game while the other was exposed to a bullfight. Overall, the children reported seeing the scene that corresponded to their culture; Mexican children tended to report seeing the bullfight, and American children tended to report the baseball game.[5] What happened was that the children made selections based on their cultural background; they were inclined to see and to report what was most familiar.

In yet another experiment demonstrating how culture influences perception, children's speech and behavior that reflected assertiveness, excitement, and interest were valued positively by Caucasian mothers. Navajo mothers who observed the same type of behavior in their children reported them as being mischievous and undisciplined. To the Navajo mothers, assertive speech and behavior reflected discourtesy, restlessness, self-centeredness, and lack of discipline; to the Caucasian mothers, the same behaviors reflected self-discipline and were, therefore, beneficial for the child.[6]

Personal credibility is another perceptual trait shaped by culture that is subject to cultural variability, as illustrated by De Mente:

> As is well known, Americans and most Europeans prize frankness, detailed presentations, and lively debate based on facts as well as assumptions. In contrast, for more than a thousand years the Japanese were programmed to speak publicly only in *tatemae* [emphasizing social expectations] terms, and reveal their *honne* (real thoughts) only in private settings.[7]

To cite another example, in Mexico, social status is a major indicator of credibility, but in the United States, it carries only modest importance. Even the perception of something as simple as the blink of an eye is affected by culture. As Adler and Rodman note, "The same principle causes people from different cultures to interpret the same event in different ways. Blinking while another person talks may be hardly noticeable to North

Americans, but the same behavior is considered impolite in Taiwan."[8]

Perception is selective. Perceptual patterns are learned.

As we noted in Chapter 2, the manner in which the elderly are perceived is also a product of culture. In the United States, culture "teaches" the value of youth and rejects growing old. According to one communication researcher, "young people view elderly people as less desirable interaction partners than other young people or middle-aged people."[9] This negative view of the elderly is not found in all cultures. For example, in Arab, Asian, Latin American, and American Indian cultures, older people are perceived in a very positive light. Notice what Harris and Moran tell you about the elderly in Africa:

> It is believed that the older one gets, the wiser one becomes—life has seasoned the individual with varied experiences. Hence, in Africa age is an asset. The older the person, the more respect the person receives from the community, and especially from the young.[10]

It is clear from these few examples that culture influences one's subjective reality and that there are direct links among culture, perception, and behavior. This concept is echoed by Chiu and Hong, who write, "[E]ven very basic cognitive processes, such as attention and perception, are malleable and can be altered through cultural experiences."[11]

We are now ready to summarize two ways that culture influences the perception process. First, perception is selective. This means that because there are too many stimuli competing for the attention of your senses at the same time, you "allow only selected information through [y]our perceptual screen to [y]our conscious mind."[12] What is allowed in is, in part, determined by culture. Second, your perceptual patterns are learned. As we have pointed out a number of times, everyone is born into a world without meaning. Culture teaches you the meaning of most of your experiences. In other words, "perception is culturally determined. We learn to see the world in a certain way based on our cultural background."[13] As is the case with all of culture, perceptions are stored within each human being in the form of beliefs and values. These two concepts, working in combination, form what are called *cultural patterns*, which are discussed later in this chapter.

Beliefs

What are your beliefs, how did you acquire them, and what function do they perform? Rogers and Steinfatt contend that "Beliefs serve as the storage system for the content of our past experiences, including thoughts, memories, and interpretations of events. Beliefs are shaped by the individual's culture."[14] Beliefs are important because they are "accepted as truths."[15] Beliefs are usually reflected in your actions and communication behavior. If, for instance, you believe that a good tan is a reflection of a healthy, active lifestyle and makes a person more attractive, you will probably find time to lie out in the sun or even go to a tanning salon. On the other hand, if you believe that suntanned skin reflects a low social status, you will probably make an extra effort to avoid exposing yourself to the sun by wearing a hat, long-sleeved shirt, and perhaps gloves, and

carrying an umbrella, on sunny days. You might embrace the *New York Times*, CNN, FOX News, or even *The Daily Show* as an arbiter of the truth because you respect it. If you value the Islamic tradition, you will believe that the Koran is an infallible source of knowledge and thus accept the miracles and promises that it offers. What you trust as a source of truth and knowledge—the *Times*, the Bible, the Koran, the Torah, the entrails of a goat, tea leaves, the Dalai Lama, visions induced by peyote, the changes specified in the Taoist *I Ching*, or a celebrity blog—depends on your cultural background and experiences. If someone believes that his or her fate is preordained, you cannot throw up your hands and declare that belief wrong just because it disagrees with your conviction that each person is the master of his or her own fate. You must be able to recognize that cultures have different realities and belief systems. People who grow up in cultures where Christianity is the predominant religion usually believe that salvation is attainable only through Christ. People who are Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, Shinto, or Hindu do not subscribe to that conviction. They hold their own beliefs about salvation, what happens to the human spirit when the body dies, and what are the appropriate rituals to perform when a person dies.[16] What is powerful about beliefs is that they are so much a part of culture that in most instances you do not question them or even demand proof. You simply accept them because you "know they are true," and thus, they endure.

Exploring Values

One of the most important functions of beliefs is that they form the basis of your values, which provide "rules for making choices and for resolving conflicts."[17] As Nanda and Warms point out, "Values are shared ideas about what is true, right, and beautiful which underline cultural patterns and guide society in response to the physical and social environment."[18] Because this is a book about culture, it is essential that you note that Nanda and Warms use *shared* in their description, because values are not only held by individuals; they are also the domain of the collective.[19] The significance of values is that they constitute a system that "represents what is expected or hoped for, required or forbidden. It is not a report of actual conduct but is the system of criteria by which conduct is judged and sanctions applied."[20] To illustrate, Hofstede offers a short list of some topics that deal with values:[21]

- Evil versus good
- Dangerous versus safe
- Ugly versus beautiful
- Abnormal versus normal
- Irrational versus rational
- Dirty versus clean
- Decent versus indecent
- Unnatural versus natural
- Paradoxical versus logical
- Moral versus immoral

Your cognitive structure consists of many values. These values are highly organized and, as Rokeach says, "exist along a continuum of relative importance."[22] Values can be classified as primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary values are the most important: they specify those things worth dying for. In the United States, democracy and the protection of oneself and close family members are primary values. Secondary values are also quite important. Alleviation of the pain and suffering of others and securing material possessions are secondary values to most people in the United States. You care about such values, but do not hold the same intense feeling toward them as you do toward primary values. Tertiary values are at the bottom of our value hierarchy. Examples of tertiary values in the United States are hospitality to guests and cleanliness. Although you

strive to carry out these values, they are not as profound or consequential as values from the first two categories.

As we pointed out in Chapter 2, values, like all important aspects of culture, are transmitted by a variety of sources (family, proverbs, media, school, church, state, etc.) and therefore tend to be broad based, enduring, and relatively stable. Also, Hofstede reminds us that "values are programmed early in our lives" and therefore are often nonrational, especially when viewed by someone from another culture.[23]

As you saw from Hofstede's list, values are generally normative and evaluative. In other words, values tell a member of a culture what is normal by identifying what things are good and bad, or right and wrong. Cultural values define what is worthwhile to die for, what is worth protecting, what frightens people, what subjects are worthy of study, and which topics deserve ridicule. As already indicated, values are learned within a cultural context. For example, the outlook of a culture toward the expression of affection is one of the many values that differ among cultures. In the United States, people are encouraged to express their feelings openly and outwardly and are taught not to be timid about letting people know they are upset. Think for a moment about what message is carried by the proverb "The squeaky wheel gets the grease." This positive American attitude toward the public expression of emotion is very different from the one found in China. As Gao and Ting-Toomey note, "Chinese are socialized not to openly express their own personal emotions, especially strong negative ones."[24] Bond points out that among the Chinese, "Uninhibited emotional display is a disruptive and dangerous luxury that can ill be afforded."[25] What is important about values is that they are translated into action. For instance, an awareness of the value the Japanese place on customer service in business transactions might prompt you to be more meticulous when dealing with a client from Japan.

Attentiveness to cultural values can also offer partial insight into a culture's approach to larger social issues. Huntington found data from the 1960s that showed the economies of South Korea and Ghana to be quite similar. By the 1990s, South Korea's economy had grown to become the fourteenth largest in the world, but Ghana's had remained static. According to Huntington, the reasons for this change were clear: "South Koreans valued thrift, investment, hard work, education, organization and discipline. Ghanaians had different values. In short, culture counts."[26]

CONSIDER THIS

Belief → Value → Attitude → Behavior

If you believe *that material possessions are a better gauge of success and status than the number of advanced degrees obtained, you will* value *education only because it helps you get a good paying job. You will probably have a positive* attitude *toward classes that are job related and a less than positive* attitude *toward required, non–career-oriented classes. This* attitude *can influence your* behavior *by motivating you to work hard in the job-related classes, at the "cost" of the other classes, and to leave school after acquiring an undergraduate degree. Conversely, if you come from a culture that believes status is automatically conferred by a graduate degree, your approach to classes might be very different.*

Cultural patterns can be thought of as systems of integrated beliefs and values that work in combination to provide a coherent, if not always consistent, model for perceiving the world. These patterns contribute not only to the way you perceive and think about the world, but also to how you live in the world.

Using Cultural Patterns

People and cultures are extremely complex and consist of numerous interrelated cultural orientations. A useful umbrella term that allows us to talk about values, beliefs, and other orientations collectively is *cultural patterns*. As you might suspect, these cultural patterns are useful in the study of intercultural communication because they are systematic and repetitive instead of random and irregular.[27]

Obstacles in Using Cultural Patterns

Before opening our discussion of cultural patterns, we need to offer a few cautionary remarks that will enable you to better use the cultural patterns presented in the remainder of this chapter.

WE ARE MORE THAN OUR CULTURE

We begin by repeating an important point made in Chapter 1: the dominant values of a culture may not be shared by all individuals within a culture. Factors as diverse as age, gender, and co-cultural affiliations, along with "socioeconomic status, educational level, occupation, personal experience,"[28] also shape your view of your surroundings, beginning very early in life. As pointed out by Lynch and Hanson, "Lessons learned at such early ages become an integral part of thinking and behavior."[29]

Because people are more than just their culture, delineating a national culture or typical patterns for any culture is extremely hazardous because of the heterogeneity of almost all societies. For example, it is estimated that together the United States and Russia contain over 125 ethnic groups. The *Encyclopedia of American Religions* identifies nearly 1,200 different religions in the United States. And, of course, the United States is home to numerous co-cultures that do not share many of the values associated with the dominant Euro-American culture. Lynch makes this point clear in the following paragraph:

> In the United States, competition is highly prized; however, the reverse is true in many Native American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Pacific Island, and Southeast Asian cultures. Competition is viewed as self-serving; and the emphasis is on cooperation and teamwork. Because competition is a negative trait in these cultures, being viewed as competitive rather than cooperative would bring shame rather than pride.[30]

Many other nations also have large and varied ethnic populations. The *CIA World Factbook* tells us that Romania has populations of Hungarians, Roma, Ukrainians,

Germans, Russians, and Turks. Peru has Amerindians, mestizos (mixed Amerindian and white), whites, blacks, Japanese, Chinese, and others. While the Han Chinese make up the majority of China's population, there are also Zhuang, Uygur, Hui, Yi, Tibetan, Miao, Manchu, Mongol, Buyi, and Korean ethnic groups. Even Japan, noted for its relative homogeneity, has significant populations of Koreans, Chinese, Brazilians, and Filipinos. In Afghanistan, Goodson notes, "Islam is divided by hundreds of variations," regional politics, and "tribal social groupings" based on communal loyalties that make it difficult to speak of a single nation or culture.[31] The division among Sunni, Shiites, and Kurds in Iraq, which is further complicated by tribalism, is now well known. Hence, cultural patterns used to characterize an entire country should generally be limited to the members of the dominant culture in that nation.

CULTURAL PATTERNS ARE INTEGRATED

Due to the linear nature of language, we are forced to talk about only one cultural pattern at a time. It is important, however, to realize that the patterns do not operate in isolation; they are interrelated and integrated. In other words, they act in concert. If a culture values the elderly, that value gets attached to yet other values related to respect and decision making.

CULTURAL PATTERNS ARE DYNAMIC

Your scan of world events—or a review of what we wrote in Chapter 1—will tell you that cultures change and therefore so do their values. The women's movement, for example, has greatly altered social organizations and some value systems in the United States. With more women than men now earning college degrees, we can see how the workplace and classrooms have changed in the United States during the last twenty years.[32] As globalization brings Western capitalism and culture to nations throughout the world, it is common to see young people in some traditional countries now wearing Levis and dancing to American pop music. However, even granting the dynamic nature of culture and value systems, we again remind you that regardless of the culture, the deep structures always resist change.

CULTURAL PATTERNS CAN BE CONTRADICTORY

In many instances, we find contradictory values in a particular culture. In the United States, we speak of "all people being created equal," yet we observe pervasive racial prejudice toward minorities and violence directed against gays. Indeed, some of the most divisive political issues now facing the United States—abortion, gay marriage, and separation of religion and state—are related to contrasting values. These sorts of contradictions are found in all cultures. The Bible advocates helping others and the Koran teaches brotherhood among all people. Yet, in both the United States and in many Arab cultures, some segments of the population are very rich and others are extremely poor. Even with the reservations we have just offered, it is our contention that the study of cultural patterns is a worthwhile endeavor that can provide considerable insight into the values, behaviors, and communication styles of other cultures.

Choosing Cultural Patterns

Deciding what cultural patterns to write about was not an easy task. We have already mentioned the idea that culture is composed of countless elements. This idea influenced our decision regarding which patterns to examine and which to exclude from our analysis. We are not the first writers who have had to decide what to include and what to exclude. Leading scholars in the area of intercultural communication have advanced numerous classifications and typologies. While there is obviously a great deal of overlap among these systems, it might help you appreciate the problems associated with isolating key patterns if we pause for a moment and mention some tools that five different scholars have developed to help them investigate and explain different cultures. Gannon uses a four-stage model, which employs cultural metaphors to help explain cultural differences.[33] Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner have established different categories to help examine and compare cultures.[34] Although Grondona focuses on economic development, he presents an excellent typology of seventeen cultural patterns (which he calls "VALUE systems") that can offer significant insight into a culture.[35] Weaver maintains that cultures can be studied and compared through eight separate cultural dimensions, which can be further divided into numerous subsets.[36]

These four different cultural pattern typologies developed by different scholars should give you an appreciation of the complexity and difficulty of deciding which patterns to include and which to exclude. However, two ideas should be apparent as we begin to isolate specific patterns. First, for most scholars of intercultural communication, cultural patterns are points lying on a continuum. The rationale is a simple one—cultural differences are usually a matter of degree. Second, there is a great deal of duplication and overlap in any discussion of cultural patterns. In fact, many of the patterns we have selected to discuss in detail are also part of the taxonomies developed by those authors just mentioned.

Dominant United States Cultural Patterns

We have already alluded to the difficulties of using a specific cultural pattern to characterize an entire culture. This problem is even more acute when one is dealing with the United States and its diverse multiethnic population. Charon notes, "Listing American values is a difficult task because there are so many exceptions and contradictions," but adds, "On a general level, Americans do share a value system."[37] Kim echoes this notion when she writes, "There are similar characteristics that all Americans share, regardless of their age, race, gender, or ethnicity."[38]

Although this book tends to focus on explaining other cultures, we nevertheless believe that a section devoted to some selected American cultural patterns would be helpful. For people who are not members of the dominant culture, we hope this discussion of cultural patterns will provide new insights and understanding. For those who are members of the dominant culture, we offer our analysis of cultural patterns for three reasons. First, as we have said throughout this book, people carry their culture wherever they go, and that culture influences how they respond to the people they meet. Second, examining one's own cultural patterns can reveal information about culture that is often overlooked or taken for granted. Finally, one's cultural patterns can serve as an important reference point for making comparisons among other cultures.

One indication of individualism is how U. S. Americans use space.

Larry Samovar

In this section, we will limit our discussion of American cultural patterns to the dominant culture, as defined in Chapter 1. As you will recall, we said that regardless of the culture being studied, the dominant culture is that part of a population that controls and dominates the major economic and social institutions and determines the flow and content of information. In the United States, that group has been, and largely continues to be, white, male, and of European heritage.[39]

Individualism

The single most important cultural pattern in the United States is individualism, often referred to as "freedom" by Americans.[40] Broadly speaking, individualism, as developed in the works of the seventeenth-century English philosopher John Locke, holds that that each person is unique, special, completely different from all other individuals, and

"the basic unit of nature."[41] Locke's view is simple: The interests of the individual are or ought to be paramount, and all values, rights, and duties originate in individuals. The value of individualism is so commanding that many other imperative American values spring from individualism. Gannon underscores the link between individualism and other values when he writes:

> "Equality of opportunity, independence, initiative, and self-reliance are some of the values that have remained as basic American ideals throughout history. All of these values are expressive of a high degree of individualism."[42]

This emphasis on the individual is also found elsewhere in the world, but it has emerged as the cornerstone of American culture. The origin of this value in the United States has had a long history. It arose from the first settlers' desire to escape the repressive social conditions that then existed in European society.[43] Whether one is considering sexual, social, or ethical matters, for Americans the self holds the pivotal position. So strong is this notion that some Americans consider that a person who fails to demonstrate individuality is out of step with society. Whether it is conveyed by literature, art, or American history, the message is the same: individual achievement, sovereignty, and freedom are the virtues most glorified and canonized.

American role models, be they the cowboys of the Old West or action heroes in today's movies and electronic games, are all portrayed as independent agents who accomplish their goals with little or no assistance. The individual is self-reliant; to depend on someone else implies weakness or loss of freedom. The result is that most Americans believe that all persons have a separate identity, which should be recognized and reinforced. As Kim points out, "In America, what counts is who you are, not who others around you are. A person tends to be judged on his or her own merit."[44]

Equal Opportunity

Closely related to individualism is the American value of equality. The preamble to the United States Declaration of Independence states that "all men are created equal."[45] This concept is further enshrined in the Constitution, which states, "No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States."[46] The founders of the United States were intent on ensuring that a social class system like the English one they had escaped from (a landed, hereditary aristocracy) did not develop in the United States. This opportunity for self-betterment was a powerful inducement for the succeeding waves of immigrants to flee Europe's class-based social systems.[47]

Rather than focus on the literal meaning of "created equal," let us look at the ideals behind those words, which we believe were best explained by Abraham Lincoln in 1860, when he said, "we do wish to allow the humblest man an equal chance to get rich with everybody else." Thus, the value that pervades contemporary U.S. society is best termed "equal opportunity." All people should have the same opportunity to succeed in life, and the state, through laws and educational opportunities, is expected to ensure that right.

The American value of equal opportunity translates into equality and informality in social relationships. For instance, most of the primary social relationships within a family tend to promote equality rather than hierarchy. Formality is not important, and children are often treated as adults. In secondary relationships, most friendships and coworkers are also treated as equals, usually interacting on a first-name basis.

People from cultures that adhere to formal social structures often find it disconcerting to work with Americans, whom they believe diminish the value of social status differences. We do not mean to imply that Americans completely ignore hierarchy. Instead, according to Althen, Americans tend to rely on more subtle ways to mark status, such as "tone of voice, order of speaking, choice of words, [and] seating arrangements."[48]

We would be remiss, when describing the dominant culture in the United States, if we did not once again remind you of some of the contradictions that often exist when we speak of individualism and equality. The history of the United States is replete with examples of discrimination based on gender, skin color, ethnic group membership, level of education, social class, sexual preference, and even choice of religion. Unfortunately, today some people still continue to use these criteria to evaluate others. While she acknowledges that many Americans have experienced periods of inequality, Hanson is correct when she writes, "Not all citizens have had equal rights throughout the course of the country's history, but Americans nevertheless value the notion highly and strive toward this ideal."[49]

Material Acquisition

Acquiring material possessions has always been an integral part of life for most Americans. As Stewart and Bennett note, "Americans consider it almost a right to be materially well off and physically comfortable."[50] Althen offers the same idea when he writes that Americans consider their materialistic nature "natural and proper."[51] However, Americans have historically been willing to work hard to realize their dreams. Thus, the acquisition of material possessions, such as a large home, a variety of clothes for every occasion, convenient personal transportation, and a large selection of foods, is considered the just reward for hard work.

Science and Technology

For most Americans, science and technology, or what Clark calls "the value of know how,"[52] take on the qualities often associated with a god. The following inscription, found on the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., expresses the same idea: "Modern civilization depends on science." Clark maintains that Americans think that scientific and technical knowledge is linked to their very survival.[53] This strong belief gives rise to the notion among most Americans that nothing is impossible when scientists, engineers, and inventors put their minds to a task. From fixing interpersonal relationships to exploring outer space, science has the answer.

The American respect for science is based on two assumptions: that reality can be rationally ordered by humans, and that such an ordering, using the scientific method, can enable people to predict and control much of life. This emphasis on science reflects the values of the rationalistic-individualistic tradition that is so deeply embedded in Western civilization. As evident in the works of John Locke, Francis Bacon, René Descartes, Bertrand Russell, and Albert Einstein, people in Western cultures have long believed that all problems can be solved by science. This emphasis on rationality and science, according to Macionis, helps "explain our cultural tendency (especially among men) to devalue emotion and intuition as sources of knowledge."[54] While Westerners tend to prize rationality, objectivity, empirical evidence, and the scientific method, these views often clash with those of cultures that value and believe in fatalism, subjectivity, mysticism, and intuition.

Progress and Change

In the United States, as Hanson reminds us, "Change, newness, and progress are all highly valued."[55] From altering their personal appearance through cosmetic surgery, to changing where they live at a faster rate than any other people in the world, Americans do not value the status quo. Nor have they ever. "Early Americans cleared forests, drained swamps, and altered the course of rivers in order to 'build' the country. Contemporary Americans have gone to the moon in part to prove they could do so."[56] Ever since the country's earliest days as a distinct national entity, people have subscribed to diffuse constellation of beliefs and attitudes that may be called the cult of progress. Various aspects of this orientation are optimism, receptivity to change, emphasis on the future rather than the past or present, faith in an ability to control all phases of life, and confidence in the perceptual ability of the common person. You can observe this passion for change and progress in the way that Americans have traditionally approached the environment—as something to be conquered, tamed, or harnessed for social or personal benefit.

As we discuss later in the chapter, many older, more traditional cultures, which have witnessed civilizations rise and fall and believe in fatalism, do not easily embrace change, progress, and daring and often have difficulty understanding the American disregard for history and tradition. As Althen notes:

> This fundamental American belief in progress and a better future contrasts sharply with the fatalistic (Americans are likely to use that term with a negative or critical connotation) attitude that characterizes people from many other cultures, notably Latin, Asian, and Arab, where there is a pronounced reverence for the past. In those cultures the future is considered to be in the hands of "fate," "God," or at least the few powerful people or families that dominate the society. The idea that people in general can somehow shape their own futures seems naïve, arrogant, or even sacrilegious.[57]

CONSIDER THIS

The high rate of volunteerism in the United States is a product of the value placed on "doing something," which motivated over 26 percent of the population to engage in volunteer work between September 2006 and September 2007.[59]

Think of some examples of activities, other than work, that people in the United States engage in to "keep busy." How could this "doing" orientation create problems in an intercultural marriage in which one party holds the "doing" orientation while the other partner values a slow-paced life?

Work and Play

As we mentioned earlier, work occupies an important position, both past and present, in the United States, as disclosed by McElroy:

> The primary American cultural beliefs derive from the initial experience of European settlers in the future United States. They all relate to work, the first necessity for survival in a wilderness. It was the peculiar experiences of work—what kind was done, who did it, how much it was rewarded—that began the process of distinguishing American behavior from European behavior, which led during the next eight generations to the formation of a new American culture.[58]

The value associated with work is so important in the United States that people who meet each other for the first time frequently ask each other, "What do you do?" Embedded in this simple query is the belief that working (doing something) is important. For most Americans, work represents a cluster of moral and affective conditions of great attractiveness, while voluntary idleness often is seen as a severely threatening and damaging social condition.

A major reward for this hard work, and an important American value, is leisure. For Americans, leisure time is something they have earned. It is relief from the regularity of work; it is in play that we find real joy. This emphasis on recreation and relaxation takes a variety of forms. Each weekend people rush to get away in their RVs, play golf or tennis, go skiing, ride their mountain bikes, go to the beach, or "relax" at a gambling casino, a racetrack, or a movie.

Competitive Nature

The late professional football coach Vince Lombardi once said, "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing."[60] This attitude toward competition is an integral part of life in the United States and is taught from early childhood on. Whether it is through childhood games or being continually asked to answer questions in the classroom, a competitive nature is encouraged among children in the United States. People are ranked, graded, classified, and evaluated so that everyone will know who the best is. The many "Top 10" lists of people, schools, hospitals, and vacation locations provided by the media illustrate our competitive nature. Young people are enculturated with the attitude that if they lose and it does not bother them, there must be something wrong with them. As Kim points out, "For competitive Americans, who hate losing, everything in life is a game to win."[61]

Competition is another pattern that often causes problems for Americans when they interact with people who do not share this value. For instance, "Asians believe that it is neither necessary nor beneficial to be obsessed with winning."[62] Harris and Moran tell us that the French may view individuals in the workplace with a competitive drive as being antagonistic, ruthless, and power hungry,[63] because French adhere to "social values that emphasize family ties" over work.[64]

Differing Cultural Patterns

So far we have discussed some cultural characteristics as they apply to the dominant culture in the United States. We are now ready to make some cultural comparisons. As we mentioned earlier in this chapter, many anthropologists, social psychologists, and communication scholars have devised taxonomies that can be used to analyze the key behavioral patterns found in every culture. While these classification listings are numerous, there are four that seem to be at the core of most intercultural communication studies. The first classification, developed by Hofstede, identifies five value dimensions (individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity/femininity, and long-term/short-term orientation) that are influenced and modified by culture. The second group of orientations (human nature, person/nature orientation, time, activity, and relational orientation) comes from the anthropological work of the Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck. Our third taxonomy, advanced by E.T.

Hall, looks at how high-context and low-context cultures respond to various message systems. The final cultural pattern was developed from research by intercultural communication scholar Ting-Toomey, whose research has highlighted the role of "face" and "face-work" in intercultural communication.

Hofstede's Value Dimensions[65]

Hofstede's work was one of the earliest attempts to use extensive statistical data to examine cultural values. In carrying out his research, Hofstede ultimately surveyed more than one hundred thousand managers in a multinational organization, from fifty countries and three geographical regions. After careful analysis, each country and region was assigned a rank of 1 through 50 in each of his studies, using four identified value dimensions (individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity/femininity). Subsequent research involving participants from twenty-three nations revealed a fifth dimension (long-term/short-term orientation) and these countries were ordered 1 through 23. These rankings not only offer a clear picture of what was valued in each culture, but also help you see comparisons across cultures. Hofstede's contention was clear. He argued "that people carry 'mental programs' that are developed in the family in early childhood and reinforced in schools and organizations . . . [mental programs] are most clearly expressed in the values that predominate among people from different countries."[66]

We need to continue to remind you that when we indicate that a culture is characterized by one of the value dimensions, we are referring to the majority of the dominant culture. Within every culture you will find individuals all along a particular value continuum. For example, in the United States, some members of the dominant culture possess strong collective tendencies. Conversely, in a group-oriented culture such as Japan, you can find individuals that subscribe to, and assert, individuality. Therefore, in any intercultural encounter, you must be mindful that the other person or persons may not adhere to the norm for their culture.

Individualism/collectivism

We first mentioned the cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism in Chapter 2, while examining the functions of family. We now return to the topic for a more comprehensive discussion. As a result of numerous scholarly studies, individualism versus collectivism (individual orientation versus group orientation) has been established "as one of the basic pattern variables that determine human action."[67] As Ting-Toomey and Chung note, "Individualistic and collectivistic value tendencies are manifested in *everyday family, school,* and *workplace* interactions."[68]

How are values of individualism and collectivism manifested? Andersen and his colleagues offer us an excellent answer to that question by defining the traits of the individualism/collectivism continuum:

> Collectivistic cultures emphasize community, collaboration, shared interest, harmony, tradition, the public good, and maintaining face. Individualistic cultures emphasize personal rights and responsibilities, privacy, voicing one's own opinion, freedom, innovation, and self-expression.[69]

With this synopsis in mind, we will now look at the two dimensions in detail.

INDIVIDUALISM

Having already touched on individualism when we looked at American culture, we now need only to identify some of its components. First, the individual is the single most important unit in any social setting. Second, independence rather than interdependence is stressed. Third, individual achievement is rewarded. Lastly, the uniqueness of each individual is of paramount value.[70] According to Hofstede's findings (see Table 5.1), the United States, Australia, Great Britain, Canada, the Netherlands, and New Zealand all tend toward individualism. Goleman highlights some of the characteristics of these and other cultures that value individualism:

> People's personal goals take priority over their allegiance to groups like the family or the employer. The loyalty of individualists to a given group is very weak; they feel they belong to many groups and are apt to change their membership as it suits them, switching churches, for example, or leaving one employer for another.[71]

TABLE 5.1 Individualism/Collectivism Values for Fifty Countries and Three Regions

RANK	COUNTRY	RANK	COUNTRY
1	United States	28	Turkey
2	Australia	29	Uruguay
3	Great Britain	30	Greece
4/5	Canada/Netherlands	31	Philippines
4/5	Netherlands	32	Mexico
6	New Zealand	33/35	Yugoslavia
7	Italy	33/35	Portugal
8	Belgium	33/35	East Africa
9	Denmark	36	Malaysia
10/11	Sweden	37	Hong Kong
10/11	France	38	Chile
12	Ireland	39/41	Singapore
13	Norway	39/41	Thailand
14	Switzerland	39/41	West Africa
15	Germany	42	El Salvador
16	South Africa	43	South Korea
17	Finland	44	Taiwan
18	Austria	45	Peru
19	Israel	46	Costa Rica
20	Spain	47/48	Pakistan
21	India	47/48	Indonesia
22/23	Japan	49	Colombia
22/23	Argentina	50	Venezuela
24	Iran	51	Panama
25	Jamaica	52	Ecuador
26/27	Brazil	53	Guatemala
26/27	Arab countries		

The lower the number, the more the country promotes individualism. A higher number means the country is more collective. Source: Adapted from Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations,* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001).

Individualism in the United States is exercised by frequent job changes. In other words, it is both common and even expected that employees will change jobs in order to advance themselves. Conversely, in Japan individuals have traditionally expected to remain with the same company for their entire career. To change jobs would be disloyal to the company and the other employees. In today's transnational, multicultural workplace, it is easy to imagine how conflicts could arise from a clash of cultural values related to individualism and collectivism.

COLLECTIVISM

"A defining character of people in collectivist cultures is their notable concern with relationships."[72] These relationships form a rigid social framework that distinguishes between in-groups and out-groups. People rely on their in-groups (e.g., relatives, clans, tribes, and organizations) to look after them, and in exchange they believe they owe loyalty to the group. Triandis suggests that some of the following behaviors are found in collective cultures:

> Collectivism means greater emphasis on (a) the views, needs, and goals of the in-group rather than oneself; (b) social norms and duty defined by the in-group rather than behavior to get pleasure; (c) beliefs shared with the in-group rather than beliefs that distinguish the self from in-group; and (d) great readiness to cooperate with in-group members.[73]

In collective societies, such as those in Pakistan, Colombia, Venezuela, Taiwan, Peru, and much of Africa and Asia, people are born into extended families or clans that support and protect them in exchange for their allegiance. In many Arabic nations, tribalism predominates. In collectivistic cultures interdependency is typical, and individual considerations

Collective cultures value the group as the most important social entity.

Gloria Thomas

are secondary to the needs and desires of one's in-group. This concept is demonstrated in African societies where, according to Richmond and Gestrin, "Individual needs and achievement, in contrast to the West, take second place to the needs of the many."[74] This perception of community is explained by Etounga-Manguelle's statement that "African thought rejects any view of the individual as an autonomous and responsible being.[75]

In African and other collective cultures, the individual is emotionally dependent on organizations and institutions, and the culture emphasizes belonging to organizations. Organizations invade private life and the groups to which individuals belong, and individuals trust group decisions even at the expense of personal rights. Characterizing China as a collective culture, Meyer notes, "With individual rights severely subordinated, group action has been a distinctive characteristic of Chinese society."[76] You can also easily discern the importance of a group orientation in this Chinese proverb: "No matter how stout, one beam cannot support a house."

Numerous co-cultures in the United States can be classified as collective. Research by Hecht, Collier, and Ribeau, for example, concludes that African Americans also exhibit the characteristics of collective societies.[77] And, according to Luckman, "Hispanics—including Mexican-Americans, Cubans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Puerto Ricans, and others—greatly value the family, and often place the needs of the family members above the needs of individuals."[78]

As is the case with all cultural patterns, collectivism influences a number of communication variables. Kim, Sharkey, and Singles, after studying Korean culture, came to believe that traits such as indirect communication, saving face, concern for others, and group cooperation are linked to Korea's collective orientation.[79] Collectivism is also contextual. For example, in collective classrooms, such as those found in Mexico, harmony and cooperation in learning are stressed instead of competition.[80] Think of what is being implied in the Mexican saying, "The more we are, the faster we finish." In the health care context, Schneider and Silverman offer the following information on Egyptian collectivism: "Even in illness, Egyptians prefer company. A stream of friends and relatives who bring him soda, food, aspirin, and advice will surround a man who has a headache or a fever. Hospitals are crowded with residents and friends visiting patients."[81]

Uncertainty Avoidance

At the core of uncertainty avoidance is the inescapable truism that the future is unknown. Though you may try, you can never predict with 100 percent assurance what someone will do or what might happen in the future. As the term is used by Hofstede, *uncertainty avoidance*:

> . . . defines the extent to which people within a culture are made nervous by situations which they perceive as unstructured, unclear, or unpredictable, situations which they therefore try to avoid by maintaining strict codes of behavior and a belief in absolute truths."[82]

HIGH-UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

High-uncertainty avoidance cultures try to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity by providing stability for their members through established, formal social protocols, intolerance of deviant ideas and behaviors, emphasizing consensus, and resistance to

change. These cultures are often characterized by relatively high levels of anxiety and stress. People with this orientation believe that life carries the potential for continual hazards.

To avoid or mitigate these hazards, there is a strong need for written rules, planning, regulations, rituals, ceremonies, and established social, behavioral, and communication protocols, which add structure to life. Nations with a strong uncertainty avoidance tendency are Portugal, Greece, Peru, Belgium, and Japan (see Table 5.2).

LOW-UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

At the other end of the continuum, we find countries like Sweden, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, the United States, Finland, and the Netherlands, which are considered to be low-uncertainty avoidance cultures. They more easily accept the uncertainty inherent

TABLE 5.2 Uncertainty Avoidance Values for Fifty Countries and Three Regions

RANK	COUNTRY	RANK	COUNTRY
1	Greece	28	Ecuador
2	Portugal	29	Germany
3	Guatemala	30	Thailand
4	Uruguay	31/32	Iran
5/6	Belgium	31/32	Finland
5/6	El Salvador	33	Switzerland
7	Japan	34	West Africa
8	Yugoslavia	35	Netherlands
9	Peru	36	East Africa
10/15	Spain	37	Australia
10/15	Argentina	38	Norway
10/15	Panama	39/40	South Africa
10/15	France	39/40	New Zealand
10/15	Chile	41/42	Indonesia
10/15	Costa Rica	41/42	Canada
16/17	Turkey	43	United States
16/17	South Korea	44	Philippines
18	Mexico	45	India
19	Israel	46	Malaysia
20	Colombia	47/48	Great Britain
21/22	Venezuela	47/48	Ireland
21/22	Brazil	49/50	Hong Kong
23	Italy	49/50	Sweden
24/25	Pakistan	51	Denmark
24/25	Austria	52	Jamaica
26	Taiwan	53	Singapore
27	Arab countries		

The lower the number, the more the country can be classified as one that does not like uncertainty. A higher number is associated with a country that does not feel uncomfortable with uncertainty. Source: Adapted from Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations,* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001).

in life, tend to be tolerant of the unusual, and are not as threatened by different ideas and people. They prize initiative, dislike the structure associated with hierarchy, are willing to take risks, are flexible, think that there should be as few rules as possible, and depend not so much on experts as on themselves. As a whole, members of low-uncertainty avoidance cultures are less constrained by social protocol.

As is the case with our other value dimensions, differences in uncertainty avoidance influence intercultural communication. In a classroom composed of children from low-uncertainty avoidance cultures, we might expect to see students feeling comfortable in unstructured learning situations, being rewarded for innovative approaches to problem solving, and recognizing that truth is relative.[83] As Hofstede points out, the opposite is the case in high uncertainty avoidance cultures. Here you find that "students expect structured learning situations and seek right answers."[84]

Power Distance

Another cultural value dimension offered by Hofstede is *power distance*, which classifies cultures on a continuum of high and low-power distance. (Some theorists use the terms "large power distance" and "small power distance" instead.) He summarizes the concept of power distance in the following manner: "Power distance as a characteristic of a culture defines the extent to which the less powerful person in society accepts inequality in power and considers it as normal."[85] The premise of the dimension deals with the extent to which a society prefers that power in relationships, institutions, and organizations be distributed equally or unequally. Although all cultures have tendencies to both high- and low-power distance relationships, one orientation seems to dominate. Foster offers a clear explanation of this dimension:

> What Hofstede discovered was that in some cultures, those who hold power and those who are affected by power are significantly far apart (high-power distance) in many ways, while in other cultures, the power holders and those affected by the power holders are significantly closer (low-power distance).[86]

HIGH-POWER DISTANCE

Gudykunst tenders a concise summary of high-power distance cultures when he writes, "Individuals from high-power distance cultures accept power as part of society. As such, superiors consider their subordinates to be different from themselves and vice versa."[87] People in high-power distance countries such as India, Africa, Brazil, Singapore, Greece, Venezuela, Mexico, and the Philippines (see Table 5.3) believe that power and authority are facts of life. Both consciously and unconsciously, these cultures teach their members that people are not equal in this world and that everybody has a rightful place, which is clearly marked by countless vertical arrangements. Social hierarchy is prevalent and institutionalizes inequality. In organizations within high-power distance cultures, you find a greater centralization of power, more importance placed on status and rank, a larger proportion of supervisory personnel, a structured value system that determines the worth of each job, and subordinates adhering to a rigid hierarchy.[88]

TABLE 5.3 Power Distance Values for Fifty Countries and Three Regions

RANK	COUNTRY	RANK	COUNTRY
1	Malaysia	27/28	South Korea
2/3	Guatemala	29/30	Iran
2/3	Panama	29/30	Taiwan
4	Philippines	31	Spain
5/6	Mexico	32	Pakistan
5/6	Venezuela	33	Japan
7	Arab countries	34	Italy
8/9	Ecuador	35/36	Argentina
8/9	Indonesia	35/36	South Africa
10/11	India	37	Jamaica
10/11	West Africa	38	United States
12	Yugoslavia	39	Canada
13	Singapore	40	Netherlands
14	Brazil	41	Australia
15/16	France	42/44	Costa Rica
15/16	Hong Kong	42/44	Germany
17	Columbia	42/44	Great Britain
18/19	El Salvador	45	Switzerland
18/19	Turkey	46	Finland
20	Belgium	47/48	Norway
21/23	East Africa	47/48	Sweden
21/23	Peru	49	Ireland
21/23	Thailand	50	New Zealand
24/25	Chile	51	Denmark
24/25	Portugal	52	Israel
26	Uruguay	53	Austria
27/28	Greece		

The lower the number, the more the country can be classified as one that has a high-power distance culture. A higher number is associated with a country that has a low-power distance culture. Source: Adapted from Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations,* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001).

LOW-POWER DISTANCE

Low-power distance countries such as Austria, Finland, Denmark, Norway, the United States, New Zealand, and Israel hold that inequality in society should be minimized. As Brislin notes, "Cultures referred to as 'low-power distance' are guided by laws, norms, and everyday behaviors that make power distinctions as minimal as possible."[89] People in these cultures see hierarchy as an inequality of roles established for convenience. Subordinates consider superiors to be the same kind of people as they are, and superiors perceive their subordinates in the same way. People in power, be they supervisors, managers, or government officials, often interact with their constituents and try to look less powerful than they really are.

We can observe signs of this dimension in nearly every communication setting. Within the educational context, Calloway-Thomas, Cooper, and Blake offer the following summary:

> In large power distance societies, the educational process is teacher centered. The teacher initiates all communication, outlines the path of learning students should follow, and is never publicly criticized or contradicted. In large power distance societies, the emphasis is on the personal "wisdom" of the teacher, while in small power distance societies the emphasis is on impersonal "truth" that can be obtained by any competent person.[91]

According to Hofstede, in a business context with low-power distance you might observe decisions being shared, subordinates being consulted, bosses relying on support teams, and status symbols being kept to a minimum.[92]

Masculinity/Femininity

Hofstede uses the words *masculinity* and *femininity* to refer to the degree to which masculine or feminine traits are valued and revealed. His rationale, and one that is supported by most anthropologists, psychologists, and political scientists, is that many masculine and feminine behaviors are learned and mediated by cultural norms and traditions. Adler feels that the terms *masculinity* and *femininity* do not adequately convey the full meaning behind this dimension and chooses to use the terms *career success* and *quality of life*.[93] While we agree with Adler's assessment, we will adhere to Hofstede's original titles and suggest you refer to Adler's labels if they help you to understand the dimension.

MASCULINITY

Masculinity is the extent to which the dominant values in a society are male-oriented. Hofstede advances an excellent summary of these values when he notes:

> Masculine cultures use the biological existence of two sexes to define very different social roles for men and women. They expect men to be assertive, ambitious, and competitive, and to strive for material success, and to respect whatever is big, strong, and fast.[94]

CONSIDER THIS

While campaigning in Pennsylvania during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary, Senator Hillary Clinton "showed her blue-collar bona fides one night by knocking down a shot of whiskey, then taking a mug of beer as a chaser. Senator Barack Obama, her opponent, went bowling in his attempt to win over working-class voters.[90] Later, we saw Obama take his daughters to a roller-skating rink in Indiana and Clinton make a stop at North Carolina's Auto Racing Hall of Fame.

What were some other examples of activities engaged in by the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates that were designed to lower their power profile?

TABLE 5.4 Masculinity Values for Fifty Countries and Three Regions

RANK	COUNTRY	RANK	COUNTRY
1	Japan	28	Singapore
2/3	Austria	29	Israel
2/3	Venezuela	30/31	Indonesia
4/5	Italy	30/31	West Africa
4/5	Switzerland	32/33	Turkey
6	Mexico	32/33	Taiwan
7/8	Ireland	34	Panama
7/8	Jamaica	35/36	Iran
9/10	Great Britain	35/36	France
9/10	Germany	37/38	Spain
11/12	Philippines	37/38	Peru
11/12	Colombia	39	East Africa
13/14	South Africa	40	El Salvador
13/14	Ecuador	41	South Korea
15	United States	42	Uruguay
16	Australia	43	Guatemala
17	New Zealand	44	Thailand
18/19	Greece	45	Portugal
18/19	Hong Kong	46	Chile
20/21	Argentina	47	Finland
20/21	India	48/49	Yugoslavia
22	Belgium	48/49	Costa Rica
23	Arab countries	50	Denmark
24	Canada	51	Netherlands
25/26	Malaysia	52	Norway
25/26	Pakistan	53	Sweden
27	Brazil		

The lower the number, the more the country can be classified as one that favors masculine traits; a higher score denotes a country that prefers feminine traits. Source: Adapted from Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations,* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001).

Ireland, the Philippines, Greece, Venezuela, Austria, Japan, Italy, and Mexico are among the countries where you can find many of the masculine values described by Hofstede (see Table 5.4). Adler reports that masculine cultures have highly defined gender roles and promote career success. "Assertiveness and the acquisition of money and things (materialism)"[95] are emphasized and often take precedence over interpersonal relationships. Ireland provides an example of the influence of strong gender roles in a masculine-oriented culture. Despite the high level of economic development, in 2007 women were elected to only 35 of the 226 combined seats available in the Upper and Lower Houses, which demonstrates a low level of political empowerment.[96]

FEMININITY

Cultures that value femininity as a trait stress nurturing behaviors. A feminine worldview maintains that men need not be assertive and that they can assume nurturing roles. It also promotes sexual equality and holds that people and the environment are

important. In addition, in feminine cultures there tends to be "weak gender differentiation in the socialization of children."[97] Interdependence and androgynous behavior are the ideal, and people sympathize with those less fortunate. Nations such as Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, and the Netherlands tend toward a feminine worldview. Quite in contrast to the masculine culture of Ireland, in Sweden, which had the highest ranking in Hofstede's femininity category, women occupied 47.3 percent of the 349 legislative positions following the 2006 election, which suggests a high level of political empowerment.[98]

The impact of masculinity/femininity on a culture can also be observed in the "gender gap" measure. In 2005, a World Economic Forum study measured the gender gap in fifty-eight countries, using five aspects of women's empowerment and opportunity: economic participation; economic opportunity; political empowerment; educational attainment; and health and well-being. Sweden and Norway were ranked first and second, respectively; the United States was seventeenth, Japan thirty-eighth, and Mexico fifty-second.[99] These rankings generally parallel Hofstede's findings.

Long- and Short-term Orientation

Over the years, there has been some condemnation of Hofstede's work. One major criticism deals with the Western bias he used when he collected the data.[100] As a means of overcoming this problem, Hofstede offered a new dimension called long- versus short-term orientation, also referred to as "Confucian Dynamism."[101] This study, involving twenty-three countries, used an assessment called the Chinese Value Survey (CVS), "an instrument developed by Michael Harris Bond in Hong Kong from values suggested by Chinese scholars."[102] Hofstede summarizes the link between this fifth orientation and Confucianism:

> The long-term/short-term orientation dimension appears to be based on items reminiscent of the teachings of Confucius, on both poles. It opposes long-term to short-term aspects of Confucian thinking: persistence and thrift to personal stability and respect for tradition.[103]

You can observe how these patterns would influence interaction in a variety of settings. For example, cultures that rank high on long-term orientation (such as China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea) would most likely have employees who reflect a strong work ethic and show great respect for status differences. You could expect individuals who are members of these cultures to value social order and long-range goals. Those cultures that rank low on the long-term orientation index (the United States, Great Britain, Canada, the Philippines), according to Hofstede, often do not place a high priority on status, try to postpone old age, are concerned with short-term results, and seek quick gratification of their needs.[104]

The Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck's Value Orientations

Our next taxonomy is from the Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck, who were cultural anthropologists (see Table 5.5), although other researchers have added to their findings.[105] The Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck based their research on the notion that every individual, regardless of culture, must deal with five universal questions. Although they used

TABLE 5.5 Five Value Orientations from Kluckhohn, Kluckhohn, and Strodtbeck

ORIENTATION	VALUES AND BEHAVIOR		
Human nature	Basically evil	Mixture of good and evil	Basically good
Humankind and nature	People subjugated to nature	People in harmony with nature	People the master of nature
Sense of time	Past oriented	Present oriented	Future oriented
Activity	Being	Being in becoming	Doing
Social relationships	Authoritarian	Group oriented	Individualism

Source: F.R. Kluckhohn and F.L. Strodtbeck, *Variations in Value Orientations* (New York: Row and Peterson), 1960.

the phrase "value orientations" to describe these five questions, they were in fact talking about what we have to this point called cultural patterns. These patterns tell the members of the culture what is important and offer them guidance for living their lives.[106] After examining numerous cultures, the Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck concluded that all people turn to their culture to assist them in answering the same five basic questions:

1. What is the character of human nature?
2. What is the relation of humankind to nature?
3. What is the orientation toward time?
4. What is the value placed on activity?
5. What is the relationship of people to each other?[107]

Two important points need to be made before we turn to a specific explanation of the five dimensions advanced by the Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck. First, as was the case with Hofstede's ranking from 1 to 50, the Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck's five orientations are best visualized as points along a continuum. Second, as you move through these five orientations, you will notice that some of the characteristics, while they might have different names, are similar to the ones discussed by Hofstede. This is understandable in that both approaches are talking about meaningful values found, to varying degrees, in all cultures. Hence, both sets of research were bound to track many of the same patterns.

Human Nature Orientation

Nearly all judgments about human behavior, be they moral or legal, begin with this core question: What is the character of human nature? Was Anne Frank right when she wrote in *The Diary of a Young Girl*, "In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart"? Or was the philosopher Immanuel Kant correct when he observed, "Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing can ever be made"?

For centuries, religious leaders, philosophers, scholars, and others have pondered questions concerning human nature. Borrowman's brief catalog offers you an example of some of these questions:

> What are the relative effects of "grace," "will," genetic heredity, geographical conditions, social institutions, and historical accident on the behavior of an individual? Would the "natural" man tend toward love and altruism in his treatment of others, or would he be

> dominated by greed and brutality? Is reason capable of dominating the behavior of man or merely a tool which he uses to mediate between demands of an insatiable id and an uncompromising super-ego?[108]

Your answers to the questions posed by Borrowman represent a powerful force in how you live your life. As Stevenson and Haberman tell us, "Different conceptions of human nature lead to different views about what we ought to do and how we can do it."[109] Although all people on an individual basis answer questions about human nature, there are also cultural explanations for why people act as they do.

Most discussions of human nature usually deal with divisions of evil, good and evil, and good. Let us look at each of these issues and examine how they often differ from culture to culture.

EVIL

Some cultures begin with the premise that people are intrinsically evil. In the United States, this orientation, which was inherited from Puritan ancestors, was the prevailing view for many years. In the last hundred years, however, U.S. Americans have come to see themselves as a mixture of good and evil. That is, most Americans now believe they are "perfectible." By following certain rules, they can change, improve, and "be saved." According to this analysis, with constant hard work, control, education, and self-discipline, people can achieve goodness. You can also notice this self-help approach to life in Christianity. For Christians, God is the father and humans are his children. As is the case with all children, they get guidance but must also make choices. According to Christianity, "We are rational beings, we have self-consciousness, and we have free choice."[110] Through those choices, we can move from being corrupt to being good.

A more restrictive view of the goodness or evilness of human nature is found in parts of the Arab world. Where Islam is strong, you can find cultures that are imbued with the notion that people have a penchant for evil and therefore cannot, when left to their own resources, be trusted to make a correct decision. Hence, to help control the actions of their members, numerous institutions, ranging from the religious to the political, are designed to monitor and manage behavior. As discussed in Chapter 3, Islam came to the Middle East at a time when the Bedouin culture was plagued with immorality and hedonism. Allah was needed, the people thought, to save the sinners.

GOOD AND EVIL

People who hold the Taoist worldview believe that the universe is best seen from the perspective of *yang* and *yin*, an infinite system of opposing elements and forces in balanced dynamic interaction. Two of the forces present in this universe are good and evil. Since humanity is part of the universe, these forces are naturally present in humankind. This idea is clearly seen in the notion of the *yang* and *yin* cycle. Periodic increases in *yang* are accompanied by corresponding decreases in *yin*; this is followed by an opposite cycle in which *yin* increases while *yang* decreases. This view of the good and evil nature of humanity extends the position that people cannot eliminate evil, because it is a natural and necessary part of the universe.

We should add that many Europeans, for very different reasons, also have a dualistic (good/evil) approach to human nature. Specifically, they believe that while we might be born with a propensity for evil, through learning and education people can become good.

GOOD

Perhaps the most extreme view of the innate goodness of human nature can be found in the philosophies of Confucianism and Buddhism. Most interpretations of the writings of Confucius maintain that he was "very optimistic" about human nature.[111] Hundreds of years later, we see this same view toward the innate goodness of people in the words of the Chinese philosopher Lu Wang: "Human nature is originally good." Buddhism also maintains that you are born pure and are closest to what is called "loving kindness" when you enter this world. Hence, people are good, but their culture often makes them evil.

Cutting across the arguments concerning the good and evil of human nature has been the question of the essential rationality of human nature. Throughout history, there has been tension between those who believe in fate or mystic powers and those who believe that the intellect can solve any problem and discover any truth. Imagine, for a moment, your perceptions of reality if you are French and take the rational approach characteristic of Descartes' philosophy, or if you are an American Indian and believe that forces external to you control much of your thinking and behavior. To cite another example, the Hindu relies on mysticism, intuition, and spiritual awareness to understand the nature of reality. A belief in fate, as opposed to one that stresses free will, is bound to yield different conclusions.

Person/Nature Orientation

HUMAN BEINGS SUBJECT TO NATURE

The differences among conceptions of the relationship between humanity and nature produce distinct frames of reference for human desires, attitudes, and behaviors. At one end of the scale devised by the Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck is the view that maintains human beings are subject to nature. Cultures that hold this orientation believe that the most powerful forces of life are beyond their control. Whether the force be a god, fate, or magic, a person cannot overcome it and must therefore learn to accept it. This orientation is found in India and parts of South America. For the Hindu, because everything is part of a unified force, "the world of distinct and separate objects and processes is a manifestation of a more fundamental reality that is undivided and unconditional."[112] This "oneness" with the world helps create a vision of a world operating in harmony. In Mexico and among Mexican Americans, there is a strong tie to Catholicism and the role of fate in controlling life and nature. As Purnell notes, "a stoic acceptance of the ways things are"[113] is at the heart of this worldview.

COOPERATION WITH NATURE

The middle or so-called cooperation view is widespread and is associated with East Asians. In Japan and Thailand, there is a perception that nature is part of life and not a hostile force waiting to be subdued. This orientation affirms that people should, in every way possible, live in harmony with nature. To cite another example, the desire to be part of nature and not control it has always been strong among American Indians. As Joe and Malach note, "Tribal groups continue to teach respect for the land and to forbid desecration of their ancestral lands. These groups also carry out various ceremonies and rituals to ensure harmony with as well as protection of the land (Mother

Robert Fonseca

Many groups teach their members to respect and live in harmony with nature.

Earth)."[114] This orientation is eloquently summarized in a statement attributed to Chief Seattle, leader of the Suquamish of Washington State: "Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web we do to ourselves. All things are bound together—all things connect."

CONTROLLING NATURE

At the other end of the scale is the view that compels us to conquer and direct the forces of nature to our advantage. This value orientation is characteristic of the Western approach, which, as we noted earlier in the chapter, has a long tradition of valuing technology, change, and science. Americans have historically believed that nature was something that could and had to be mastered. Even our language reflects this orientation. Early West European immigrants to North America encountered a vast, unforgiving wilderness that they set about to "tame," and modern astronauts are working to "conquer" space. People with this orientation see a clear separation between humans and nature.

We can often find examples of cultures clashing because of divergent views on how to relate to nature. A case in point is the ongoing controversy between the dominant American culture and some American Indian tribes who object to widespread extraction of natural resources, such as strip-mining of coal and clear-cutting of timber, because it disfigures the earth and displaces spirits worshipped by the tribes. Our cultural orientation toward controlling nature can be seen in a host of other instances.

Probably the most controversial contemporary examples are bioengineering and stem cell research.

Time Orientation

As a species, our fixation with time and the power we give it are rather obvious. As is the case with most of the issues discussed in this book, cultures vary widely in their perspective toward time. Where they differ is in the respective values placed on the past, present, and future and on how each influences interaction. So important is a culture's use of time that we develop the subject in detail in Chapter 7, but for now let us simply highlight some of the major cultural differences in the perception of time as it applies to the Kluckhohn, Kluckhohn, and Strodtbeck taxonomy.

PAST ORIENTATION

Past-oriented cultures believe strongly in the significance of prior events. History, established religions, and tradition are extremely important to these cultures, so there is a strong belief that the past should be the guide for making decisions and determining truth. You can see this orientation in China, which because of its long and resplendent history continues to respect the past. Chu and Ju found that respect for their historical heritage was considered the most important traditional value among Chinese.[115] There is even a famous Chinese proverb that states, "The past is as clear as a mirror, the future as dark as lacquer." In Japan, where Shintoism is strong and reverence toward ancestors is important, the past still remains paramount. Great Britain, because of its devotion to tradition, including the continuation of a monarchy, resists change as it continues to value its historical achievements. France is yet another culture that can be understood by exploring its view of the past. The French, on many levels, venerate the past. As Hall and Hall tell us:

> The importance of French history to the average French person can hardly be overstated. The French live surrounded by thousands of monuments to their glorious past. Every quarter in Paris has its historically important statues, buildings, or fountains, daily reminders of past achievements. French villages have statues to local heroes and important political leaders. As a result of this constant immersion in history, the French tend to see things in their historical context and relate contemporary events to their origins.[116]

In the United States, American Indians—in part because of their strong oral tradition—also value the past. Many of their stories, in fact, use the past to set examples and to "provide moral guidelines by which one should live."[117]

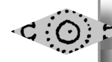
PRESENT ORIENTATION

Present-oriented cultures hold that the immediate moment has the most significance, because they see the future as vague, ambiguous, and unknown. For these cultures, what is real exists in the here and now, and the present should be enjoyed. People of the Philippines and most Latin American countries usually hold these beliefs. Mexican Americans also "prefer to experience life and people around them fully in the present."[118] Luckmann suggests that this view is also characteristic of the African-American co-culture.[119]

FUTURE ORIENTATION

Future-oriented cultures, such as the U.S. dominant culture, emphasize what is to come, and expect the future to be grander than the present. What is going to happen holds the greatest attraction for most Americans because whatever we are doing is not quite as good as what we could be doing; things will always be better in the future. This does not mean that Americans have no regard for the past or no thought of the present, but it is certainly true that most Americans, in thought or action, tend to look forward.

Like many other orientations, a person's view of time is related to a host of other values. For example, Americans' view of the future makes them optimistic. This is reflected in the common proverb "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." This optimistic view of the future also sees Americans believing they can control the future. This belief was clearly spelled out by former President Lyndon Johnson when he told all Americans that "Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or to lose."

IMAGINE THIS 

Alex, a junior at State University, was having coffee with his friend Brenda. Alex looked around and said, "We've been here for over three years now. I am ready to graduate and get a job. Ten years from now, I'll have a good paying job in retail management. I am going to invest my money for the future, because I want to be able to retire early. Can you guess what I want to do after retiring? I'd like to buy an RV and see all the national parks."

What do you think might happen if Alex married someone from a present-orientation culture?

Activity Orientation

Activity orientation is the way a culture views activity. Three common approaches to activity, as detailed by the Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck, are classified as being, being-in-becoming, and doing.

BEING ORIENTATION

A *being* orientation refers to spontaneous expression of the human personality. As Adler and Jelinek point out, "People in being-orientated cultures accept people, events, and ideas as flowing spontaneously. They stress release, indulgence of existing desires, and working for the moment."[120] Most Latino cultures have the view that the current activity is the one that matters the most. In Mexico, for example, people take great delight in the simple act of conversation with family and friends. Mexicans will talk for hours with their companions, for they believe that the act of "being" is one of the main goals and joys of life. Gannon observes that

> "[Mexicans] value leisure time spent with their family and friends more highly than work . . . [because] they are motivated by affiliation rather than achievement, and their emphasis is on being rather than doing."[121]

Richard Porter

How you decide to spend your leisure time is in part determined by your culture.

BEING-IN-BECOMING ORIENTATION

The *being-in-becoming* orientation stresses the idea of development and growth. It emphasizes the kind of activity that contributes to the development of all aspects of the self as an integral whole. This usually correlates with cultures that value a spiritual life more than a material one. For example, in both Hinduism and Buddhism, people spend a portion of their lives in meditation and contemplation in an attempt to purify and fully advance themselves. Many of the New Age religious movements in the United States also stress the need to develop the being-in-becoming approach to daily life.

DOING ORIENTATION

The *doing* orientation describes activity in which accomplishments are measurable by standards external to the individual. The key to this orientation is a value system that stresses activity and action. It is the doing orientation that most characterizes the dominant American culture. Kim offers an excellent synopsis of Americans' attitude toward doing and activity in the following paragraph:

> Americans are action oriented; they are go-getters. They get going, get things done, and get ahead. In America, people gather for action—to play basketball, to dance, to go to a concert. When groups gather they play games or watch videos. Many Americans don't have the patience to sit down and talk. . . . Life is in constant motion.[122]

The doing orientation of a culture impinges on many other beliefs and values. Your definition of activity affects your perception of work, efficiency, change, time, and progress.

Even the pace at which you live your life—from how fast you walk to the speed at which you reach conclusions—is related to where you land on the being/doing scale. Americans have long admired and rewarded people who can make rapid decisions and "speak up" quickly, and they even become impatient with people who are too reflective. Writing about American education, Newman notes:

> The child who speaks when the teacher requests a response is rewarded. The one who ponders is often considered withdrawn, problematic. The educational system appears to favor students who have the immediate answer, not those who take time to consider other questions.[123]

This attitude toward activity contrasts with that fostered by the Taoist tradition, where the individual is not the active agent; he or she is to remain calm, and truth eventually will make itself apparent. Imagine members of these two cultures occupying the same classroom. African Americans are also a doing culture. Emotional vitality, activity, openness of feelings, and being expressive, which are part of the African-American experience, all involve forms of doing.[124]

Hall's High-context and Low-context Orientations

The anthropologist Edward Hall offers us another effective means of examining cultural similarities and differences in both perception and communication. He categorizes cultures as being either high- or low-context, depending on the degree to which meaning comes from the setting rather than from the words being exchanged.[125] The assumption underlying Hall's classifications is that "one of the functions of culture is to provide a highly selective screen between man and the outside world. In its many forms, culture therefore designates what we pay attention to and what we ignore."[126]

For Hall, *context* was "the information that surrounds an event; it is inextricably bound up with the meaning of the event."[127] His work revealed that cultures were often characterized by high- or low-context communication, which could be described in the following manner:

> A high context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicitly transmitted part of the message. A low context (LC) communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code.[128]

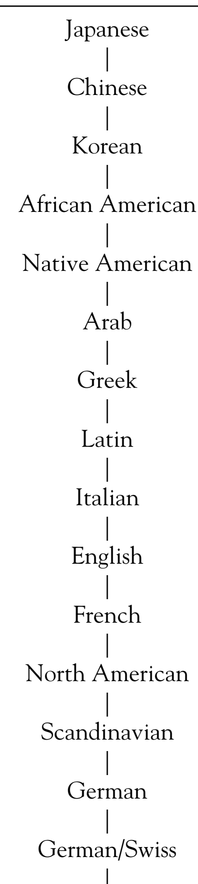
Although all cultures contain some characteristics of both high- and low-context variables, most can be placed along a scale showing their ranking on this particular dimension (see Table 5.6). To emphasize this fact, we have placed various cultures on a continuum rather than using only two rigid categories.

High Context

In high-context cultures (American Indian, Latin American, Japanese, Arab, Chinese, African American, and Korean), many of the meanings being exchanged during the encounter do not have to be communicated through words. One reason that meanings

TABLE 5.6 Cultures Arranged Along the High-Context and Low-Context Dimension

HIGH-CONTEXT CULTURES



LOW-CONTEXT CULTURES

Source: Based on the work of Edward T. Hall. E.T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 91.

often do not have to be stated verbally in high-context cultures is that the people are very homogeneous. They have similar experiences and information networks, and well-established social protocols. High-context cultures, because of tradition and history, change very little over time. According to Hofstede, high-context cultures are "more often found in traditional cultures."[129] These are cultures in which consistent messages have produced consistent responses to the social environment. "As a result," the Halls say, "for most normal transactions in daily life they do not require, nor do they expect, much in-depth background information."[130] Because meaning is not necessarily contained in words, in high-context cultures, information is provided through inference, gestures, and even silence.

People from high-context cultures tend to be aware of their surroundings and can express and interpret feelings without verbally stating them. Andersen points out,

"High-context cultures are more reliant on and tuned in to nonverbal communication."[131] Meaning in high-context cultures is also conveyed "through status (age, sex, education, family background, title, and affiliations) and through an individual's informal friends and associates."[132] Because of the subtle "messages" used by high-context cultures, members of these groups, according to Gudykunst, often "communicate in an indirect fashion."[133] They rely more on *how* something is said, rather than *what* is said, and are acutely aware of nonverbal cues.

Low Context

In low-context cultures (German, Swiss, Scandinavian, and North American), the population is less homogeneous and therefore tends to compartmentalize interpersonal contacts. This lack of a large pool of common experiences means that "each time they interact with others they need detailed background information."[134] In low-context cultures, the verbal message contains most of the information and very little is embedded in the context or the participants. This characteristic manifests itself in a host of ways. For example, the Asian mode of communication (high context) is often vague, indirect, and implicit, whereas Western communication (low context) tends to be direct and explicit. In addition, as Lynch notes, "Low-context communicators talk more, speak more rapidly, and often raise their voices."[135] Althen offers an excellent summary of Americans' fascination with language in the following paragraph:

> Americans depend more on spoken words than on nonverbal behavior to convey messages. They think it is important to be able to "speak up" and "say what's on their mind." They admire a person who has a large vocabulary and who can express him- or herself clearly and cleverly.[136]

Differences in perceptions of credibility are yet another aspect of communication associated with these two orientations. In high-context cultures, people who rely primarily on verbal messages for information are perceived as less credible. They believe that silence often sends a better message than words, and that anyone who needs words does not have the information. As the Indonesian proverb states, "Empty cans clatter the loudest." Ting-Toomey has observed that the communication differences between high-context and low-context cultures are also apparent in the manner in which each approaches conflict. For example, because high-context cultures tend to be less open, they consider conflict harmful to most communication encounters. For them, Ting-Toomey says, "Conflict should be dealt with discreetly and subtly."[137]

Face and Facework

Our last cultural pattern is called "face" and "facework." Here we are using the term *face* as a metaphor for the self-image you want to project to other people. Since it is how you want others to see you, it is a product of social interaction and, as such, can be either lost or gained.[138] *Facework* is the construction and communication of face. In other words, facework comprises the various actions you engage in to acquire face for yourself or give face to someone else. For a job interview, you will probably wear your best dress or suit and be sure to arrive a few minutes before the scheduled time. During the interview, you will remember to sit erect, maintain eye contact, respond to questions with

thoughtful answers, use more formal terms of address, and avoid slang. These efforts amount to self-directed facework because you want to make a positive impression on the personnel manager. As the old adage goes, you will "put on your best face." Complimenting a friend on being promoted at work or for achieving a new personal best time in a bicycle race is an example of other-directed facework.

Ting-Toomey has conducted extensive research into the role of face and facework in intercultural communication, especially in conflict situations. Her work assumes that people from all cultures strive to "maintain and negotiate face in all communication situations."[139] Face and facework, however, are influenced by cultural values and vary from one culture to the next.[140] In individualistic cultures, for example, people are more concerned with maintaining their own face. Stewart and Bennett tell us that in the United States, "Self-definition is determined primarily by personal achievement."[141] This means that a person's face is usually derived from his or her own self-effort and is normally independent of others. Since U.S. Americans do not normally rely on group affiliation for their identity or social support, they are less concerned with how they influence someone else's face. This produces a rather direct, forthright communication style. Common expressions in the United States such as "don't beat around the bush," "tell it like it is," "tell me what you really think," and "don't hold anything back" demonstrate the value placed on open, candid communication. In some instances, positive interpersonal relations may take a back seat to frankness. Gudykunst and Nishida tell us that "North Americans see threats to their credibility or self-image as face threats," and actual loss of face is a result of personal failure.[142]

In collectivistic cultures, group membership is normally the primary source of identity and status. Considerable value is placed on establishing and sustaining stable, harmonious relationships with members of these in-groups. This is evident in what constitutes face in collectivistic societies. For the Japanese, face involves "honor, appearance of propriety, presence, and the impact on others."[143] Among the Chinese, according to Gao and Ting-Toomey, "gaining and losing face is connected closely with issues of social pride, honor, dignity, insult, shame, disgrace, humility, trust, mistrust, respect, and prestige."[144] As you would suspect, extreme politeness is also part of face-saving in that being rude or disrespectful would cause the other person to feel shame and experience a lack of pride.

These varying attitudes as to what represents face have a very noticeable impact on how a culture views and approaches conflict. Kim tells us that in collective cultures in-group conflict "is viewed as damaging to social face and relational harmony, so it should be avoided as much as possible."[145] As a result, in collectivistic cultures maintenance of mutual and other-face receives greater emphasis than self-face. In Japan, for instance, an individual's actions that discredit or bring shame to other in-group members or disturb smooth interpersonal relations will result in a loss of face.[146]

The different values placed on face, what constitutes face, and how it is managed have a very noticeable influence on facework. Drawing on the individualism/collectivism cultural pattern, Ting-Toomey posits that when confronted with the potential for conflict, collectivists will be more inclined toward avoidance and obligating measures.[147] This is a result of concern for both mutual face and others' face, and how one's actions may affect others. March illustrates this concern for other-face when he relates that a widespread practice in Japan is to pay the bill without first checking it. To examine the bill would create a loss of face for the store personnel and the store itself.[148] Individualists, however, are concerned primarily with self-face and tend to favor confrontational

and solution-oriented approaches to resolve conflicts.[149] In the United States, therefore, it is quite common to closely examine a bill before paying it.

These contrasting attitudes toward conflict produce quite different culturally based communication styles. During intercultural communication events, these contrasting styles can produce confusion, misinterpretation, or even animosity among the participants. Adherence to an indirect communication style (such as in high-context cultures) in order to sustain amicable relations can actually produce the opposite effect among individualistic participants. Conversely, the use of open, direct, forthright communication (such as in low-context cultures) can be perceived as rude and inconsiderate by collectivistic participants, who will consider the interaction as face threatening.

The differences between face and facework across cultures are a function of different cultural values. Just as we have discussed throughout this chapter, the variation in cultural values has a direct and continuing influence on how you perceive the world, behave, and communicate. As we conclude this chapter, we urge you to learn more about variations in cultural patterns so that you will be able to understand, predict, and even adapt to the behavior of people from cultures different from your own.

SUMMARY

- Culture and communication are so intertwined that it is easy to conceive of culture as communication and communication as culture.
- Culture seeks to tell its members what to expect from life, and thereby reduces confusion and helps predict the future.
- The basic elements of culture are history, religion, values, social organizations, and language.
- Culture is shared, learned behavior that promotes individual and social survival, adaptation, and growth and development.
- Culture most directly affects communication because culture is (1) learned, (2) transmitted from generation to generation, (3) based on symbols, (4) dynamic, and (5) an integrated process.
- Perception is best defined as "the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting sensory data in a way that enables us to make sense of our world."
- Perception is the primary mechanism by which you develop your worldview.
- Beliefs are one's convictions about the truth of something—with or without proof.
- Values are enduring attitudes about the preferability of one belief over another.
- Cultural pattern taxonomies are used to illustrate the dominant beliefs and values of a culture.
- Dominant American cultural patterns include individualism, equal opportunity, material acquisition, science and technology, progress and change, work and play, and competitive nature.

- A prominent taxonomy of diverse culture patterns that explains both perceptual and communication differences is Hofstede's Values Dimension, which includes (1) individualism and collectivism, (2) uncertainty avoidance, (3) power distance, (4) masculinity and femininity, and (5) long-term and short-term orientation.
- The Kluckhohn, Kluckhohn, and Strodtbeck Value Orientation taxonomy includes (1) human nature, (2) the perception of nature, (3) time, (4) activity, and (5) relationships.
- In Hall's Context Orientation, *high context* and *low context* describe the degree to which individuals rely on internalized information.
- For Ting-Toomey, face and facework take different forms and are valued differently across cultures. Face is a function of group affiliation in collectivistic cultures and is self-derived in individualistic cultures. In conflict situations, collectivistic cultures focus on other-face and mutual face, while individualistic cultures focus on self-face.

ACTIVITIES

1. In small groups, list the American cultural values mentioned in this chapter. Try to think of other values that are not included in the text. Then find examples from American advertising campaigns that illustrate these values. For example, the advertising slogan from an athletic-shoe manufacturer, "Just do it," reflects the American value of accomplishment.
2. Working with others in a small group and using Hofstede's value dimensions, make a list of behaviors found in American culture that reflect individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and femininity.
3. Working in a small group, make a list of typical American behaviors that relate to evil, good and evil, and good. How widespread are these behaviors within the culture?
4. Examine your behavior and determine how well you fit into the various degrees of time orientation.
5. Think about a recent conflict situation in which you participated (e.g., an argument with your significant other, your parents, or a stranger). What communication strategies did you use to give, maintain, or take face?

DISCUSSION IDEAS

1. How does learning about one's culture help in understanding other cultures?
2. What differences in behavior are exhibited by people who come from cultures that have different activity orientations?
3. Examine the concept of high- and low-context cultures. What problems can you anticipate when you are communicating with someone who holds a different context orientation?
4. How does cultural diversity in social perception affect the intercultural communication process?
5. What cultural values help explain why face is more important in Asian societies than in the United States?

CHAPTER 6

Language and Culture: The Essential Partnership

Language shapes the way we think, and determines what we think about.

BENJAMIN LEE WHORF

If we spoke a different language, we would perceive a somewhat different world.

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

Language is the roadmap of a culture. It tells you where its people came from and where they are going.

RITA MAE BROWN

Obviously, language is at the core of human interaction. It enables us to exchange abstract ideas, setting us apart from other animal species by allowing us to say or write down abstract ideas. As we noted in Chapter 1, this allows us to pass culture from one generation to the next. It was largely through language that you learned your cultural values and behaviors. Additionally, your name is integral to your personal identity and your first language is the cornerstone of your national identity.[1] Language is a particularly important aspect of studying intercultural communication. By definition, in practically every intercultural communication interaction at least one person will be speaking their second language. The exception is when you are communicating with members of some co-cultures, such as the African-American, gay, or disabled communities. Even then, you will likely encounter unfamiliar, specialized English language usage such as argot and slang.

The importance of language in contemporary society is increasing as a result of globalization and immigration, which continue to bring people from different cultures together on an unprecedented scale. And these people very often speak different languages, which gives rise to broad changes in societal requirements. The results of current language diversity in both the United States and internationally are illustrated in the following examples:

- In addition to English, California's elementary schools must deal with over three hundred languages.[2]

- California's basic driver's license test is administered in thirty-two languages, ranging from Amharic to Vietnamese.[3]
- Because of increased numbers of immigrants who do not speak English, U.S. hospitals are employing videoconferencing systems to connect with translators in distant locations. One interpreting service, Language Access Network, provides 24/7 access to 150 languages.[4]
- For some 5.5 million U.S. students, English is a second language.[5]
- The perceived need to learn English is causing large numbers of Korean mothers and children to relocate so the children can attend schools in English-speaking countries, while the fathers remain in Korea.[6]
- In response to China's increased international prominence, there are around forty million people in the world currently studying Mandarin Chinese. In U.S. universities, the number of students studying Mandarin rose to over 51,600 in 2006, an increase of 51 percent from 2002. In 2007, over three thousand U.S. high school students participated in Chinese-language Advanced Placement tests. Approximately five hundred U.S. primary and secondary schools were offering Mandarin in 2008, a twofold increase from 2004.[7]

With these few examples, we hope we have convinced you of the growing number of people from different cultures speaking different languages, who are interacting with

People in many cultures derive a great deal of pleasure from the art of conversation.

David Frazier/PhotoEdit

each other. For this reason, it is important to understand how culture and language complement each other. In this chapter we will examine what language is, what it does, and how it reflects cultural values. We will also look at the role of language in different intercultural communication venues, including the Internet.

Social and Cultural Functions of Language

Communicative Exchange

Using a language of one kind or another is a daily occurrence for nearly everyone in the world. You chat with friends, respond to questions in class, use a cell phone to call home, talk with coworkers, listen to music on your iPod, or tune in to a TV show. Reading advertisements, perusing study material, surfing the Internet, taking lecture notes, sending text messages, and many other seemingly mundane activities are all important parts of your daily schedule. In order to accomplish any of these activities, you must use language. Without language, you would be unable to speak, read, write, listen to others, or even talk to yourself—that is, to think. In effect, you would be unable to communicate without language.

But language also serves important communicative functions other than directly expressing and exchanging ideas and thoughts with another person or persons. For example, language allows you to verbally convey your emotions and relieve stress by simply uttering a phrase (*dang it*) or a swear word (*damn*). You use language to express pain (*ouch*), elation (*great!*), disappointment (*oh no!*), and surprise (*what the…?*).[8] Often, you use these or similar expressions almost involuntarily and even when no one is around. Language is also used to invoke assistance from the supernatural. A Jewish rabbi praying at the Wailing (or Western) Wall in Jerusalem, a Buddhist priest chanting in *Kiyomizu-dera* temple in Kyoto, Japan, a Mongolian shaman murmuring incantations while in a trance at a remote location on the vast Mongolian steppe, the Pope blessing the crowd gathered in St. Peter's Square, a Muslim attending Friday prayers at the *Al-Masjid al-Haram* (Holy Mosque) in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and a child quietly reciting the Lord's Prayer during Sunday school at a small Protestant church in western Wyoming are all using language in an appeal to a greater power.

Language and Identity

We discussed identity in Chapter 4 and briefly mentioned its relation to language at the beginning of this chapter. Language, however, plays a much greater role in forming and expressing identity than you might realize. Remember the heated controversy a few years ago over making English the official language of the United States, which many consider a response to the rising tide of illegal immigrants. During General Franco's autocratic rule of Spain (1939–1979), Spanish was made the country's official language and other languages were prohibited. However, after Franco's death and the restoration of democracy, regional languages such as Catalan, in Catalonia, and Euskara, in the Basque region, began to be spoken again. Today, approximately 17 percent of the population speaks Catalan and 2 percent use Euskara.[9] While they represent only 22 percent of the Canadian population,[10] French speakers have made French "the official language of Québec."[11] In Wales, part of the United Kingdom, identity is closely

CONSIDER THIS

To see how language can vary with age group, watch a video of a movie from the 1940s, '50s, or '60s. Listen to the dialogue, especially the slang, and compare it with the terminology you use today.

Is it understandable? Does it sound strange?

tied to Welsh, the ancestral tongue.[12] Language can also be used to construct a new national identity, as was done with Hebrew in Israel in 1948, when there was an urgent need to unify extremely diverse groups from many different nations who spoke a variety of languages.[13]

Ethnic identity is also derived, in part, from language. Black English Vernacular (BEV), or Ebonics, helps create and reinforce a sense of mutual identity among African Americans. Dialects or accents can also be a part of one's identity. Think for a minute about the stereotypical southern drawl, the strong nasal twang of former First Lady Laura Bush, which is characteristic of Texas, the variety of accents encountered in metropolitan areas of Boston and New York City, or the surfer's lingo heard in southern California. Each of these different linguistic conventions contributes to the user's regional identity.

Language usage also serves to organize people into groups according to factors such as age, gender, and even socio-income level. The terminology one uses can easily mark one as young or old. Older adults may use "service station" to refer to what younger people call a "gas station" or "filling station." Recall how some of the words your grandparents used seemed "old fashioned." Additionally, language is part of your gender identity. Women and men use language differently, both in word choice and behaviorally. Among English speakers, women tend to ask more questions, listen more, and use supportive speech behaviors. Men, on the other hand, are more prone to interrupt and to assert their opinion, and are poor listeners.[14] In Japan, the difference between men's and women's language is even more pronounced. Women employ more honorific terms and the two genders often use a different word to say the same thing. Language has also been found to characterize people into varying social and economic levels. As Finegan reports, a series of studies examining the speaking habits of people in the United States, England, Canada, and Argentina found variations based on "different socioeconomic status."[15]

Language and Unity

A common language lets individuals form groups and engage in cooperative efforts on both large and small scales. A shared vocabulary allows a group to record and preserve past events, albeit often with a selective interpretation. These recordings provide the group with a communal history which, when passed on to new generations, becomes a unifying force. The deeds of previous generations become an important means to socialize and enculturate children with the group's enduring values and normative behaviors. In other words, language helps us to maintain a record of traditional expectations, which binds us together. We must add, unfortunately, that the unity created by a shared language can also become a divisive force when people start to identify too strongly with their native tongue and feel threatened by others speaking a different language. The maintenance of social relations also relies on language for more than

communicating messages. For example, the type of language used to express intimacy, respect, affiliation, formality, distance, and many other conditions can help you sustain a relationship or disengage from one.[16]

Language and Culture

What Is Language?

At the most basic level, language is merely a set of shared symbols or signs that a cooperative group of people has mutually agreed to use to create meaning. The relationship between the selected sign and the agreed meaning is quite often arbitary.[17] We can easily illustrate this concept by looking at some of the varied symbols used by different cultures to identify a familiar household pet. In Finland, they have settled on *kissa*, but in Germany, *katze* has been chosen, and Swahili speakers use *paka*. The Japanese decided on *neko* ([illegible]), Tagalog speakers in the Philippines prefer *pusa*, and in Spanish-speaking countries, *gato* has been selected. In the English language, *cat* is the term used. As you can see, none of the words has any relation to the actual characteristics of a cat. They are simply arbitrary symbols that each language group uses to call to mind the common domestic pet, or sometimes a larger wild animal such as a tiger, lion, or leopard. These differences in symbols also extend to how people of a cultural group *hear* natural sounds.[18] For instance, in the United States, pigs are heard to make an "*oink, oink*" sound, but for the Japanese the sound is heard as "*bu–bu–*". The noise made when someone is walking in beach sandals is "*flip-flop*" in the United States but "*peta-peta*"

Photo by Richard Porter

Symbol systems can take a variety of forms.

REMEMBER THIS

A language is a set of symbols that a cultural group has agreed to use to create meaning. The symbols and their meanings are often arbitrary.

in Japan. When you applaud an outstanding performance in the United States, the sound is "*clap-clap*," but in Japan, it's "*pachi-pachi*."

It is also common to find significant differences *within* a major language group. You have probably noticed that people from various regions of the United States may refer to things that are unfamiliar to you. Many people in the southern United States eat "grits" (coarsely ground cornmeal) for breakfast, while someone in Rhode Island may cool off in the afternoon with a "cabinet" (milk shake), and at a luau in Hawaii, people may eat "lomi-lomi" salmon (a salad made of raw salmon, tomatoes, and onions). Many regional expressions, especially along the eastern seaboard of the United States, are a reflection of the different early groups of English-speaking immigrants who colonized the United States.[19] While English can vary within national boundaries, more prominent differences, such as pronunciation, spelling, and terminology, can be found when comparing English-speaking countries such as Australia, England, and the United States. For example, an Australian may refer to a cup of tea as a "cuppa." Australians also pronounce the "ay" sound as "ai." This can lead to confusion, as well as consternation, when someone from Sidney asks his friend in Los Angeles how she will celebrate "Mother's Dai." A comparison of common terms used in the United States and Australia is presented in Table 6.1.

Pronunciation differences, or accents, between the English-speaking countries are a product of early immigration and the natural evolution of the language. Rubenstein provides a clear explanation of this process:

> Again, geographic concepts help explain the reason for the differences. From the time of their arrival in North America, colonists began to pronounce words differently from the British. Such divergence is normal, for interaction between the two groups was largely confined to exchange of letters and other printed matter rather than direct speech.[20]

TABLE 6.1 U.S. English and Australian English Comparative Terms

AMERICAN ENGLISH	AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH
Ranch	Station
Herd (of cattle)	Mob
Round up (of cattle)	Muster
Pasture	Paddock
Cowboy/Ranch hand	Stockman/Jackaroo
(Baby) pacifier	Dummy
Garbage dump	Tip
Trash can	Bin
Case of beer	Slab of beer
Shopping cart	Shopping trolley
Jell-O	Jelly
Diapers	Nappies
(Car) trunk	Boot
(Car) hood	Bonnet

However, variations in spelling between American English and that used in England were the result of a calculated effort to create a new national identity and distance the new colonies from ties with England. When Noah Webster sat down to write his early American dictionary, the underlying objective was to "create a uniquely American dialect of English."[21]

Of course, English is not the only language to have significant deviations across international borders. There are numerous differences in spelling between the Portuguese used in Portugal and that used in Brazil and the former Portuguese colonies in Africa. However, in a move to eliminate disparities and standardize the language, in 2008 Portugal's parliament "adopted a widely contested standardization that requires hundreds of words to be spelled the Brazilian way."[22]

Language Variations

In addition to the differences discussed above, cultures are also characterized by a number of other language variations, some of which are discussed below.

ACCENT

As we mentioned earlier, accents are simply variations in pronunciation that occur when people are speaking the same language. These are often a result of geographical or historical differences, such as those among English speakers, which we discussed above. In the United States, you often hear regional accents characterized as "Southern," "New England," or "New York." Additionally, someone using English as a second language may have a noticeable accent, and it can sometimes be associated with a specific country, such as Germany or India.

DIALECT

In addition to pronunciation variations that characterize accents, dialects are distinguished by differences in vocabulary, grammar, and even punctuation.[23] Black English Vernacular, which we referred to earlier, represents a very distinct dialect in the United States. The Japanese, often considered a homogeneous culture, have a number of dialects, and some, like *Kagoshima-ben* and *Okinawa-ben* in the south, are extremely difficult for outsiders to understand. Chinese is usually considered to have eight separate major dialects (Cantonese, Mandarin, Hakka, etc.), which are bound by a common writing system but are mutually unintelligible when spoken. Indeed, some scholars consider the dialects as separate languages.[24]

CONSIDER THIS

Unfortunately, cultures sometimes ascribe behavioral or intellectual characteristics to different accents. For example, what characteristics do you associate with a slow Southern drawl or a rapid Brooklyn accent? What mental images come to mind when you hear someone speaking English with an obvious Spanish or Italian accent? How have media stereotypes influenced your perception of accents?

ARGOT

Argot is a private vocabulary peculiar to a co-culture or group. In the United States, many individuals employ a specialized vocabulary that identifies them as a member of a particular co-culture or group, such as prisoners or those engaged in criminal activities, gay men, street gangs, and professional or sporting groups. Members of these groups may employ a specialized vocabulary to obscure the real meaning, or to create a sense of identity. While technically an argot, professional terminology is often referred to as *jargon*.[25] Workers in vocational fields such as medicine, engineering, or computer science make extensive use of professional jargon. The sports world is also filled with jargon specific to each particular type of athletic activity.

SLANG

Slang designates those terms, used in instances of extreme informality, which serve as a "means of marking social or linguistic identity."[26] Slang can be regionally based, associated with a co-culture, or used by groups engaged in a specific endeavor. Young Japanese provide us an example of regional slang. In the Tokyo area, McDonald's (*Maku Donarudo*) is referred to as *Maku*, but further to the west, in Osaka, it becomes *Makudo*. And in both locations, Starbucks is *Sutaba*. The word "dude" can help us understand slang identifiable with a particular endeavor. Originally, "dude" was a derisory term used by rural inhabitants to refer to someone from the city. Later, it became popular among the early Southern California surfing community and then spread to the general population, where it is now commonly used to address or refer to another person.

BRANDING

Corporate marketing has created a phenomenon, referred to as *branding*, that frequently transcends language differences. Branding is the use of a corporate name or symbol (i.e., a logo) to prominently identify a product or create a widely recognized image. Globalization has resulted in many major "brands" being recognized around the world, irrespective of national language. Symbols such as McDonald's golden arches, Nike's "swoosh," the Starbucks mermaid, or the distinctive Mercedes-Benz three-pointed star in a circle, along with numerous other logos like those of Yahoo!, Google, or Coca Cola, are immediately recognized by millions of people around the world, irrespective of the language they speak.

The Symbiosis of Language and Culture

We are in agreement with Salzmann's statement that "human culture in its great complexity could not have developed and is unthinkable without the aid of language.[27] The reason they are linked is simple: they work together in a symbiotic relationship that ensures the existence and continuation of each. In order to have a culture, language is needed so group members can share knowledge of beliefs, values, and behaviors and engage in communal endeavors. In turn, culture is needed to organize disparate individuals into a cohesive group so those beliefs, values, behaviors, and communal activities can develop. Thus, it is readily apparent that language and culture are inseparable. Without both, you would almost certainly not be enjoying the lifestyle you have today. Take

A. Ramey/PhotoEdit

Language diversity is an important matter of concern in the United States.

a moment and consider the importance of language in accomplishing and recording some of the achievements (e.g., air conditioning, abundant food, transportation, and computers) that were derived from the scientific and social cooperative activities that culture facilitated, and that contribute to a comfortable standard of living.

But this productive relationship goes beyond promoting and recording achievements. In fact, it can be said that language reflects what is important in a culture and, in turn, culture shapes language. This means that "those aspects of culture that are important for the members of a society are correspondingly highlighted in the vocabulary."[28] For example, in American English there are many words and phrases relating to time usage: "don't be late," "hurry up," "work quickly," "time is money," "time is of the essence," etc. This illustrates the importance that people in the United States place on time. Applying this concept to other languages, we find that Germans

CONSIDER THIS

There are a variety of Japanese words used to describe rice, which many Japanese people eat two or three times each day. Here are just a few of the terms.

ine—*rice growing in the field*

genmai—*unpolished (brown) rice*

shinmai—*rice harvested this year*

gohan—*steamed glutinous rice*

okoge—*scorched rice*

momi—*rice with the husk still on*

kome—*uncooked white rice (e.g., at the store)*

komai—*rice harvested last year*

okayu—*rice gruel*

*Try to think of some things in your own culture that can be referred to by a wide selection of different words or phrases. (*Hint: *start with* automobile.*)*

in Munich can use more than seventy words to talk about beer; the Aymara Indians of Bolivia have over two hundred words to refer to potatoes, their primary source of food; and the Nuer tribe in southern Sudan has over four hundred words for discussing cattle, which provide their livelihood.[29] And it is easy to imagine that Arabic has few words to describe the characteristics of a reindeer, while Sami, the language of the traditional reindeer-herding culture in the northern parts of Norway, Finland, and Sweden, probably has an extremely limited vocabulary for discussing camels.

This concept of the symbiotic relationship between culture and language was ably summed up by Carroll when he said, "Insofar as languages differ in the ways they encode objective experience, language users tend to sort out and distinguish experiences differently according to the categories provided by their respective languages."[30] In the next section we draw on Carroll's insight in an effort to demonstrate how language can reflect the broader traits that characterize a cultural group.

Language as a Reflection of Cultural Values

In the previous chapter, we discussed in detail what are interchangeably called *value dimensions*, *cultural patterns*, *cultural orientations*, or *cultural characteristics*. Regardless of which of these terms you decide to use, they all refer to the interrelated orientations that help us understand the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a culture. These orientations can also be reflected in the content and use of a culture's language. In this section, we will contrast American English and Japanese in an attempt to demonstrate some selected value dimensions. There are several reasons for comparing American English and Japanese. The two nations' economies are intertwined, U.S.-Japan security cooperation is the linchpin of peacekeeping in the Pacific, and the two languages are those most studied by your authors. We contend, however, that an examination of other languages would reveal similar findings to those discussed below, and in some instances we will include examples from other languages.

High and Low Context

In Chapter 5, we discussed Edward T. Hall's concept of high- and low-context cultures and told you that Japan was considered to be a high-context culture and the United States was low-context. This classification becomes readily apparent in the Japanese language, which contains many words having identical pronunciation but quite different meanings. For example, *kiku* can have two distinct meanings. One is "to hear or listen" (i.e., *minasan kitte kudasai* = everyone please listen), and the other meaning is "to ask" (i.e., *sensei ni kitte kudasai* = please ask the teacher). Both are pronounced the same way and written with the same ideograph. In conversation, the listener must determine the meaning from the context. *Sumimasen* is even more context dependent, as it can mean "excuse me," "sorry," or "thank you," or can be used to attract someone's attention. Moreover, it is always written the same way. *Osoi* is yet another word that has dual meanings ("slow" or "late") but is written and pronounced identically.

This high context nature of the Japanese language is, according to Takemoto, a result of the nation's early history:

> Japanese is a language which was formed and developed by a people who had lived self-sufficiently in a closed society since prehistoric times. Being generally isolated from the

> other groups of inhabitants of Japan, the members of each small triangular community knew one another exceedingly well in every respect. Family life as well as social life, in such a small secluded society, was more or less routine, and the smallest amount of language must have been required for mutual understanding. That is why in Japan there has been a persistent tendency to believe that verbal language is not necessarily the best medium for enhancing human understanding, and preference has always been given to non-verbal communication.[31]

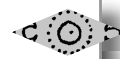
We do not mean to imply that there are no English language words that are written and pronounced in the same way, requiring the receiver to use the context to determine the intended meaning. The word "lead," for example, can be interpreted as a metal or an act of leading someone or something. "Magazine" can be interpreted as something you read or a place where explosives are stored. There are other examples, of course, but the number is small in comparison to the Japanese language. The high-context character of Japanese was best summed up by a native-speaking Japanese language instructor: "We are always listening to what was said before and what was said after."[32]

As we explained in the previous chapter, a high-context culture, such as Japan, will often place more emphasis on *how* something is said rather than what is said. For example, during a business dinner in the United States, the host may suggest, "Shall we have some wine with dinner?" In Japan, however, the suggestion may be vague and imbedded in a statement or question like "*Sake* goes well with many Japanese dishes," or "Do they have Japanese *sake* in America?"

High and Low Power Distance

Power distance, or how a culture accepts status differentials among the population, can also be exhibited in a country's language. As you will recall, the United States is a low–power distance culture and organizational hierarchy is normally rather flat. Workers consider each other more or less as equals, regardless of the position held. For example, titles are usually not widely used, especially after first meetings, except for high government officials, medical doctors, and religious figures. The relationship between U.S. corporate employees is usually conducted on a first-name basis, and referring to someone by their position (e.g., President Smith, General Manager Jones, etc.) is simply not done.

Japan, on the other hand, is a high–power distance culture and titles are a part of daily life, even among close friends and immediate family members. The company president is referred to as *Shachō san* (Mr. President), and much further down the corporate hierarchy, the person in the first level of management is called *Kachō san* (Mr. Section

IMAGINE THIS 

Among Japanese students, when an underclassman addresses an upperclassman, they ordinarily use the term sempai*. This identifies the individuals' respective status and marks one as a superior and the other as a subordinate. Thus, Ms. Yamada, a sophomore, would address Ms. Ito, a junior, as* Ito sempai*.*

Think for a moment about how you could use English to show your status when addressing freshmen and sophomores, and juniors and seniors, in a U.S. university

TABLE 6.2 Japanese Suffix Terms Used with an Individual's Name

TERM	USE	EXAMPLE
Last name plus *sensei*	Used by students to address their teacher; Also used with doctors and political figures	Yamada *sensei*
Last name plus *sama*	Used by a junior to address someone much higher in status or a customer.	Yamada *sama*
Last name plus *san*	Most commonly used title to show respect.	Yamada *san*
First or last name plus *kun*	Used by a senior to address a junior. Also used among close friends	Yuki *kun* Yamada *kun*
First or last name plus *chan*	Used to address girls and small children	Yuki *chan* Yamada *chan*

Note: *All but the last of these suffixes are gender neutral;* san *can be translated as "Mr." or "Ms.," as required by the situation.*

Chief). First names are not normally used, as the Japanese prefer to use last names followed by a suffix term that is determined by the type or level of the relationship. Professor Hiroshi Suzuki, for example, would be called *Suzuki sensei* by his students. Table 6.2 contains those suffix terms most often used among the Japanese.

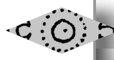
When talking to a third person, Japanese children refer to their parents with the terms *chichi* (father) and *haha* (mother). However, when addressing their parents directly, the more formal terms *Otōsan* (father) and *Okasan* (mother) are used. Status difference is also marked by the use of reference terms that designate the individual's birth order position within the family. *Ani*, for example, is used to refer to one's older brother, and the younger brother is *otōto*. Likewise, older (*ane*) and younger (*imōto*) sisters have their respective terms of address. But when Japanese directly address one of their siblings, they often use more respectful language—*oniisan* (older brother) and *onesan* (older sister). The oldest son in a family is *chōnan* and the second son is *jinan*. Subsequent sons are assigned a number with the term *otoko*. Thus, the fifth son would be *go otoko* (fifth male). These terms demonstrate that hierarchy plays a role even within the intimacy of the Japanese family.

As illustrated by the examples in this section, the complex use of Japanese honorifics attests to the importance of status in Japan. According to Kindaichi, "The complicated language of respect of *keigo* is related to the natural disposition of the Japanese to strictly observe different levels of social standings."[33] But, Japanese is not the only language that demonstrates a culture's emphasis on hierarchy and formality. The German language has an informal "you" (*du*) and a formal "you" (*sie*). Looking at German socio-economic classes, the formal "sie" is common among the middle and upper classes. In their places of employment, German working class people tend to use "du" when interacting with cohorts they perceive to be of the same class background, but "sie" when addressing a supervisor. Terms of respect are also common in the languages of Korea, China, and Thailand.[34] In Chapter 8 we will discuss the Spanish formal and informal terms to use when addressing someone.

Individualism and Collectivism

Whether a culture emphasizes individuals or social relations can also be examined through the language they use. Gao and Ting-Toomey note that "Traditionally, the Chinese self involves multiple layers of relationships with others.[35] With this collective

orientation, it is not surprising that in the Chinese language, the word closest in meaning to "individualism" (*ge ren zhu yi*) often carries a negative connotation and "implies selfishness."[36] Nisbett tells us that in the Japanese and Korean languages, words for self-reference take different forms depending on the context. This, he reports, is a result of the "Eastern conviction that one is a different person when interacting with different people."[37] The value placed on relationships among the Japanese is seen in the extensive vocabulary related to emotions.[38] The Japanese will also use the word *uchi* (inside), commonly translated as "home" or "family," to refer to their place of employment, which demonstrates the value placed on group relationships.[39]

IMAGINE THIS 

*An example of the role of group affiliation in Japan is the protocol used in a business or official phone call. When the phone is answered, the caller will first state his or her company's name followed by their family name. This helps the person receiving the call to determine the status and potential importance of the call. Thus, Ms. Suzuki who works for Chubu University would say, "*Chubu daigaku no Suzuki desu*" (literally: Chubu University of Suzuki).*

Recall how businesspeople in the United States identify themselves on the phone. Is it different from the Japanese way? If so, can you think of cultural reasons for the difference?

In contrast, American English is replete with words and phrases that promote the individual. In the United States, children are continually told they need to be "independent" and "self-reliant," and hear phrases like "stand on your own two feet" and "don't depend on others." Americans are taught to make independent decisions and freely voice their opinions, even when differing from others. As a result, terms that link a person to a group are often considered negative. For example, "group-think" is used to characterize what is considered an ineffectual way to make decisions. However, in Japan, where consensual decision making is the norm, the term can take on a very different connotation. In the United States, the word "family" usually connotes a nuclear family consisting of parents and their children. However, in Mexico, the word *familia* carries a much larger meaning and "transcends individuals and generations. The family brings together the past, present, and future through kinship ties and the transmission of member identity."[40]

The objective of the previous sections was to acquaint you with the interrelatedness of language and culture. In the remainder of the chapter, our intent is to help you to recognize some of the difficulties resulting from language differences in intercultural communication situations and deal with those problems.

Language in Intercultural Communication Interactions

As we stated at the beginning of this chapter, almost every intercultural communication interaction involves one or more individuals who are using a second language. Thus, it is quite impossible to discuss all of the many scenarios where language is a factor in creating a mutual understanding between all involved parties. Later in

the book, we devote entire chapters to intercultural communication interactions in business, health care, and education contexts, and attempt to discuss a broad spectrum of factors that influence understanding. But here, we want to acquaint you with three different settings where language is a particularly important issue: (1) interpersonal interactions, (2) interpretation and translation, and (3) intercultural marriage.

Interpersonal Interactions

When individuals from different cultures engage in communication, it is very likely that one or more will not be using their native language. Unless those speaking a second language are fluent or near fluent, there is an extremely high potential for miscommunication. Therefore, if you are using your own language while interacting with a non-native speaker, there are several considerations you should attend to in order to reduce the potential for miscommunication.

MINDFULNESS

In any intercultural communication interaction, it is especially important that you be *mindful.* This is defined by Langer as creating new categories, being receptive to new information, and realizing that other people may not share your perspective.[41] Creating new categories means moving beyond those broad, general classifications you may have been relying on for many years. As an example, instead of categorizing someone as Asian, you should attempt to move to more specific classifications that factor in gender, age, national and regional identity, occupation, etc. (e.g., "a young Chinese male college student from Beijing"). Being receptive to new information may mean something as simple as learning that some people consider dog meat a delicacy or do not wear shoes inside their homes. Learning about different perspectives can be as complicated as trying to understand why another culture sees nothing wrong in bribing government officials or giving preference to family members.

We would add to this list that being mindful also involves being aware that using a second language is much more physically and cognitively demanding than speaking one's native language. When trying to assign meaning, an individual using a second language to communicate must be more alert to what the other person is saying and how it is being said. Concurrently, they must be thinking about how to respond. Depending on the degree of fluency, this may require the second-language speaker to mentally translate the received message into his or her native language, prepare a response in the native language, and then cognitively translate that response into the second language. If the second-language vocabulary is limited, the cognitive demands are even greater. This difficulty is increased if the second-language speaker is unfamiliar with the native speaker's accent. For example, if the second-language speaker was taught Australian English but is trying to interact with an American English speaker from New York who speaks rapidly and incorporates colloquialisms and slang, the problem of understanding will be significantly compounded.

As you can see, the second-language speaker is confronted with a much greater mental task than the native speaker. This cognitive process can produce both mental and physical fatigue. Thus, the native speaker must be alert to signs that the second-language speaker is growing tired. There are, however, some steps that you can take to help lessen

the cognitive demand placed on the second-language speaker and reduce the possibility of miscommunication.

SPEECH RATE

One of the problems encountered by second-language speakers is that native speakers often seem to talk quite fast. For example, if you are interacting with someone who is using English as a second language, you cannot automatically assume that he or she is completely fluent. Therefore, until you can ascertain the other person's level of language competence, you should speak a bit more slowly and distinctly than you normally do. By closely monitoring feedback from the second-language speaker, you can adjust your speech rate accordingly. It is also important that you try to look in the direction of the other person, as this can aid in understanding the second language.

VOCABULARY

Determining the second-language speaker's vocabulary level is also important. Until you are sure that the other person has the requisite second-language ability, you should avoid professional vocabulary, technical words, and acronyms. Metaphors, slang, and colloquialisms can also impede understanding and should not be used. Additionally, recall that earlier we warned that humor does not travel across cultures. What you may consider as a funny joke could be viewed as offensive in another culture.

MONITOR NONVERBAL FEEDBACK

When interacting with someone using a second language, you need to be alert to the individual's nonverbal responses to your messages. This can give you cues about your speech rate and type of vocabulary, as well as whether the individual understands what you are saying. Moreover, in an intercultural situation, you need to be aware of cultural differences in nonverbal cues. For instance, if your Japanese counterpart is giggling at something you said, which you know is not humorous, it might be a signal that he or she does not fully understand your message. At the same time, you should not expect a second-language speaker to exhibit the nonverbals to which you are accustomed. If they stand farther away than you are accustomed to, are less demonstrative, refrain from smiling, or avoid direct eye contact, these may be normal nonverbal behaviors in their culture.

CHECKING

By "checking," we mean that you should include measures to help you ensure your intercultural partner understands your messages. If you feel the second-language speaker is having difficulty comprehending something you said, simply say, "Let me say that another way," and rephrase your statement. Also, if you actively check for understanding, try to do so from a subordinate position. That is, instead of asking, "Do you understand?" which places the burden on the other person, ask, "Am I being clear?" In this manner, you take responsibility for the conversation and avoid any potential for embarrassing the other person. This can be of considerable importance when interacting with someone from a culture that places a high value on face. Another means of checking is to write a few words of the message you are trying to convey. Some people's reading skills may be greater than their listening ability.

REMEMBER THIS

- *An interpreter works with spoken or signed language.*
- *A translator works with written text.*

Interpretation and Translation

In the globalized world, there is an increasing need to interpret or translate from one language to another. As an illustration, the United Nations uses six official languages—Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish—for all meetings and documents.[42] On a far greater scale, in order to manage communication in twenty-three different languages, the administrative body of the European Union (EU), the European Commission, has a Directorate General for Interpretation and a Directorate General for Translation.[43]

The term "translating" is quite often used in a broad sense to refer to changing messages, either written, oral, or signed, from one language to another. However, when working in a professional context, such as international relations or business, "translation" is taken to mean working with written messages. "Interpretation," on the other hand, indicates changing oral or signed messages from one language to another.[44] An awareness of this distinction becomes somewhat important when working with international organizations that must continually manage information flows in two or more languages.

INTERPRETATION

In contemporary society, the presence of interpreters is becoming ever more commonplace. Within the United States, translation services are now the norm in our health care centers, courtrooms, business conferences, and even classrooms. Television news clips of international meetings often show participants with headsets or earphones. Almost any unposed photo of the U.S. president conversing with a foreign government leader will show one or two individuals standing behind the participants translating their conversation. The presence of either earphones or an interpreter indicates what type of translation is being done—*consecutive* or *simultaneous*.

C*onsecutive* translation is most often used in business meetings or small, informal gatherings. In this method, the speaker will talk for a short time and then stop to allow the interpreter to convey the message to the other party. *Simultaneous* translation is done using audio equipment, with the translator located in a soundproof booth. This method is a much more demanding process because the speaker does not pause, which requires the translator to listen and speak simultaneously.[45] In each method, a high level of fluency in both of the languages being used is obviously necessary, as well as the ability to discern any emotional fluctuations in the speaker's voice, which can vary between cultures.

TRANSLATION

As we mentioned above, a translator's task is to convert written text from one language into another. Types of texts can vary widely, including official government documents, international contracts, scientific papers, and even novels and poetry. Although translators are not subjected to the time constrains that interpreters face, they are often required

to be knowledgeable in, and possess a comprehensive vocabulary of, a specific subject area. These subject areas can be highly technical, e.g., when translating scientific documents. Some translation tasks also require an extensive awareness of cultural nuances in both behaviors and languages. As an illustration, if translating a Japanese novel into English, the translator would need to be aware of contemporary colloquialisms and slang. For example, if the novel mentions a large truck (*oki torakku*), it could become "eighteen-wheeler" or "semi" in American English, but in the United Kingdom, "articulated lorry" would be the proper term. Similarly, if the novel referred to an "American dog" (*Amerikan doggu*), the Australian version would use "Dagwood Dog," and for the U.S. adaptation would use "corn dog."

CONSIDER THIS

The following examples demonstrate some of the cultural challenges of translating or interpreting languages.

- Pokari Sweat *and* Calpis *are both well-known sports drinks in Japan.*
- KinKi Kids *is a popular "boy band" from the Kinki region in central Japan, and* Kinki University, *located near Osaka, offers degrees in law, medicine, engineering, and business.*
- Chicken without sexual life *is a menu item in China.*

Interest in machine translation has been growing in the computer age. However, language variations in grammar, sentence structure, and culture make this a daunting task. Although machines have lessened the burden of some elementary, routine translations, according to Crystal, "It is unlikely that machines will replace human translators in the foreseeable future."[46]

Intercultural Marriage

As we discussed in Chapter 1, intercultural marriages are on the rise across the globe. The problems associated with any marriage are multiple, but when two people from different cultures wed, numerous additional problems are thrown into the mix. Some decisions may be relatively benign, such as what type of food to eat, where to live, or what holidays to celebrate. Other choices will be more problematic, as the couple grapples with cultural differences in gender-role expectations, conflict management, emotional display, values, social behaviors, child-rearing practices, extended family relations, and many, many more issues. As in any marriage, communication is the key to managing these challenges and finding mutually agreeable resolutions. But to achieve effective communication in a cross-cultural marriage, the couple must deal with the problem of multiple languages.

One of the first decisions will be which language the couple will use to communicate with each other. Unless each is fluent in the other's native tongue, this decision can create issues related to identity and power, as well as complicating daily communication. In some cases, the couple may resort to a third language they have in common.[47] If, for instance, in a mixed marriage the husband is from Germany and the wife is from Spain, and neither speaks the other's language, they may opt to use a third language, such as English or French. Power imbalances can arise from the ability of only one

spouse to speak the language of the couple's country of residence. In these situations, the non-speaker may be forced to become overly reliant on the mate,[48] which can affect self-esteem and identity.

Another potential linguistic pitfall in a mixed marriage centers on determining which parent's language to use to raise the children. If only one parent's language is used, the culture of the other parent will be subordinated. In many cross-cultural marriages, this problem has been solved by using a "one parent, one language" strategy.[49] This involves each parent speaking his or her native language, or another selected language, to the children. Thus, the children are raised in two languages, becoming bilingual, and the cultures of both parents are recognized and passed on.

Our discussion has focused more on the potential difficulties of an intercultural marriage than the advantages. We hope you are not discouraged by this, because these problems are easily offset by the rewards. For instance, dealing with the many adversities can bring a cross-cultural couple closer together, resulting in greater intimacy. Additionally, sharing each other's cultures—becoming bicultural—will likely broaden perspectives and create a richness that is difficult to realize when living in a single culture.

Communication Technology and Language

Modern communication technology has enabled people around the world to easily "connect" through both voice and text messages. The Internet enables people from different cultures to interact across vast distances, though they must find a common language. Internet communication is a topic of such scale that new books and articles are continually being produced. Thus, it is not our intention to provide you a comprehensive examination of the interaction between technology and culture. That endeavor is far beyond the scope of this book. Rather, we want to provide you a perspective on the variety of languages used across the Internet.

Spencer Grant/PhotoEdit

The Internet provides the opportunity for people from diverse cultures to learn about each other.

Currently, English is the most common language among Internet users, followed by Chinese and Spanish.[50] This had led to some concern about English becoming the dominant world language.[51] Two important reasons for this current predominance of English on the Internet are (1) the system was conceived and implemented in the United States and was therefore designed for English speakers, and (2) English "is the lingua franca of scientific and academic publishing."[52] However, there is growing evidence that other languages are gaining a greater Internet presence. Over 72 percent of the population of the United States uses the Internet, which means that more than 220 million U.S. Americans are going online.[53] In June 2008, China surpassed the United States as the leading nation for the number of Internet users, with some 253 million online users.[54] But that number represents only 19 percent of China's population.[55] This suggests that in the future, Chinese will become much more prevalent as an Internet language. And India, with only 5 percent of its population presently accessing the Internet,[56] could well become another factor in the linguistic future of the World Wide Web.

Just as previous Western mass media, such as television, music, and videos, increased the world's exposure to English, so has the Internet. But Danet and Herring tell us that "the possibility of a single language prevailing to the exclusion of all others seems remote."[57] What seems possible, however, is "an oligarchy of the world's largest languages—Chinese, Spanish, English, Arabic, Malay, Hindi, Russian—each of them dominating in its geographical region, where it also enjoys economic and cultural influences."[58] From this synopsis of languages on the Internet, we now offer several examples of problems that can arise when a multicultural group is interacting through computer-mediated communication (CMC).

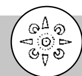
There are a variety of available forms for Internet interaction—blogs, chat rooms, Skype, social-networking websites, and of course e-mail. The latter is a common feature in the corporate world, with employees sending messages to people in other countries or states, or even someone in the same room. One culturally related problem that can arise in e-mail exchanges is trying to determine the context of a message,[59] which can be a critical factor for people in high-context cultures. This may have been a factor in Fouser's findings that some Japanese felt that e-mail provided an anonymity that "encouraged people to use casual and blunt language."[60] On some occasions, the directness created interpersonal conflict among workers. The anonymity that the Internet can provide has also raised concerns that the "greater freedom available online to chat with young people of the opposite sex could potentially break down traditional Islamic barriers to mixed-sex interaction."[61]

Computer-mediated communication has increased both the ease and speed of communication, but this acceleration can create problems in organizations with a multicultural workforce whose first language varies. McDaniel tells us that problems can arise when multiple e-mails on a specific topic are exchanged among multinational employees. The messages must be in a common language, but first-language users will read, comprehend, and respond much faster then second-language users. As the exchange proliferates, understanding and responding by second-language users will continue to lag and begin to compound, and they may quickly find themselves excluded from the exchange.[62]

These few illustrations demonstrate how language, culture, and technology can coalesce and influence intercultural communication. As communication technologies continue to expand and you become connected with more and more people from other cultures speaking other languages, effective use of the new capabilities will also depend on your intercultural competence.

Language Considerations in Intercultural Competence

In a conversation discussing Belgium's three official languages, a Belgian businessman explained that one of the first questions asked during employment interviews is, "Do you speak languages?"[63] This priority is a product of Belgium being geographically quite small, which creates a need for international economic commerce. In many ways, Belgium's need to trade in the international market is a microcosm of globalization. As world society becomes more interconnected and more integrated, there is a corresponding need to speak more than one language. While bilingualism is official in only a small number of nations—such as Switzerland, Belgium, India, and Canada—it is practiced in almost every country.[64] In the United States, there are large communities of people who speak languages other than English. Many of these are immigrants, but there are also many American Indians that continue to use their tribe's language (e.g., Navaho or Western Apache).



REMEMBER THIS

There are 331 languages spoken in the United States—162 indigenous languages and 149 immigrant languages.[65]

Learning another language can be extremely difficult, demanding considerable time and effort, but the advantages are so numerous as to make the effort worthwhile. Pagel suggests that studying another language and culture has the potential to help you "think about the world in different dimensions."[66] As we said about intercultural marriages, living with two cultures can produce a much richer life. A second language can also help you to better understand the people of the other culture, and indeed gain a greater awareness of cultural influences in general. Obviously, knowledge of another language will help you communicate with other people. But more than that, it also tells the native speakers that you are interested in them, and that you value them and their culture.[67] Using another language can also help you better express yourself or explain certain concepts or items. Lal, a native Hindi speaker, explained that English, his second language, had no "words for certain kinds of relationships and the cultural assumptions and understandings which go with them."[68] Wong, who speaks Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) and English tells us the same thing: "Relying only on English, I often cannot find words to convey important meanings found in Chinese."[69] Thus, learning a second language can provide greater insight into the emotions and values of another culture, which will increase your intercultural understanding and competence. However, just as we have continually said that that no culture is better than another, the same holds true for language. Just like cultures, they all work for the people that speak them.

SUMMARY

- Language allows us to exchange abstract ideas, which sets us apart from other animal species.
- Language is an integral part of identity.

- Based on the language they use, people can be categorized into groups such as age, gender, and socio-income level.
- The use of a common language enables people to organize into groups and perform collective activities.
- Language is a set of shared symbols that people use to create meaning; the relationship between the sign and the meaning is often arbitrary.
- There are usually variations within language groups, such as accents, dialects, argot, and slang.
- Corporate brands and logos are often understood across cultures irrespective of language.
- Culture and language form a symbiotic relationship because without one, the other could not exist.
- Cultural values, or dimensions, can be reflected in the language used by a culture.
- In any intercultural communication interaction, it is probable that someone will be using a second language.
- Using a second language can be both physically and cognitively demanding.
- When speaking to someone who is using a second language, you should be mindful, monitor your speech rate, vocabulary, and nonverbal feedback, and check to ensure that the other person understands your message.
- Interpreters work with spoken or signed language; translators work with written messages.
- *Consecutive* translation is when you stop every minute or so to allow the translator to relay your message in the other language. *Simultaneous* translation occurs while the speaker talks in the original language.
- In a cross-cultural marriage, language plays a key role in communication and can also influence identity and power relationships.
- "One parent, one language" is an approach in which each parent uses a different language to interact with his or her children. The children grow up bilingual.
- English is the most common language used on the Internet at this time. However, the increasing number of Chinese users could alter this in the future.
- Some scholars have predicted an oligarchy of major world languages—Chinese, Spanish, English, Arabic, and Russian—in the future.
- Using computer-mediated communication (CMC) can affect the interaction between members of high-context cultures.
- One way of enhancing your intercultural communication competency is to learn another language.

ACTIVITIES

1. Take four different English proper nouns (other than someone's name) and use online translation dictionaries to translate each noun into five different languages. Do some of the translated nouns have a resemblance to the English nouns? If so, can you think of a possible reason?
2. Try to find someone who is from a culture that uses an indirect communication style and who uses English as a second language. Ask that person how his or her native tongue is different from English when using language in an indirect manner.
3. Talk with two or three people over sixty years of age and ask them for some examples of the slang they used in their younger days (e.g., "groovy, man"). Try to compare it with slang that is popular now.
4. Working with someone from another culture whose second language is English, compile a list of animals, then are common to both of you then compare the sounds that each of you hears from those animals.
5. Meet with one or two non-native English speakers to identify the kinship terms they use in their family (e.g., mother, brother, etc.). Do they use the same terms when referring directly to a family member and in a third person situation? Do they have kinship terms that vary with age differences? What cultural values do you think their terms reflect?

DISCUSSION IDEAS

1. In a small group, discuss what images come to mind when you hear different types of accents. Try to decide why you form those images.
2. Some scholars think the world is moving toward an "oligarchy" of languages from the major economic powers. Do you think this would be a good or bad occurrence? Why? What will happen to minority languages, and what will be the result?
3. Discuss different ways that language differences could influence an intercultural marriage.
4. Some countries have an official language (or languages), but others do not. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a country having an official language? Should the United States have an official language? Why?

CHAPTER 7

Nonverbal Communication: The Messages of Action, Space, Time, and Silence

There are times when silence has the loudest voice.

LEROY BROWNLOW

To know what people think, pay regard to what they do, rather than what they say.

RENÉ DESCARTES

When American troops drove through the streets of Iraq, they thought they were being greeted by throngs of happy children. They observed hundreds of children lining the streets of Baghdad giving them the "thumbs-up" sign. However, as Woodward points out, the Americans "did not realize that in Iraq the thumbs-up sign traditionally was the equivalent of the American middle-finger salute."[1] Misinterpreting the nonverbal actions of people from different cultures is rather commonplace. For example, in Mexico it is not unusual to see both men and women hugging each other in public. Yet in cultures such as China and Japan, these open displays of physical contact are normally excluded from interpersonal exchanges. Moving one's head from side to side in the United States is usually a sign of "no" and means disagreement, yet in India the same sign often represents agreement. In Western cultures, people normally greet by shaking hands. Arab men often greet by kissing on both cheeks. In Japan, men greet by exchanging bows. In Thailand, to signal another person to come near, one moves the fingers back and forth with the palm down. In the United States, you beckon someone to come by holding the palm up and moving the fingers toward your body. In Vietnam, that same motion is reserved for someone attempting to summon his or her dog. Crossing one's legs in the United States is often a sign of being relaxed; in Korea, it is a social taboo. In Japan, gifts are usually exchanged using both hands. Muslims consider the left hand unclean and do not eat or pass objects with it.

The above examples were offered for two reasons. First, we hoped to arouse your interest in the subject of nonverbal communication. Second, we wanted to demonstrate that although much of nonverbal communication is universal, many of your nonverbal actions are shaped by culture. Those actions are at the core of this chapter.

To appreciate the importance of nonverbal communication to human interaction, you should reflect for a moment on the countless times in a day that you send and receive nonverbal messages. Barnlund highlights some of those times:

> Many, and sometimes most, of the critical meanings generated in human encounters are elicited by touch, glance, vocal nuance, gestures, or facial expression with or without the aid of words. From the moment of recognition until the moment of separation, people observe each other with all their senses, hearing pause and intonation, attending to dress and carriage, observing glance and facial tension, as well as noting word choice and syntax. Every harmony or disharmony of signals guides the interpretation of passing mood or enduring attribute. Out of the evaluation of kinetic, vocal, and verbal cues, decisions are made to argue or agree, to laugh or blush, to relax or resist, or to continue or cut off conversation.[2]

The Importance of Nonverbal Communication

With just a handful of examples, Barnlund makes it clear why nonverbal communication is an indispensable and all-pervasive element of human behavior. Perhaps its most obvious application is seen in infants. Babies start comprehending words at around six months of age, yet understand nonverbal communication well before that time. Hence, from the moment of birth to the end of life, nonverbal behavior is an important symbol system. This importance is made clear by Knapp and Hall, who conclude that any "list of all the situations where nonverbal communication plays an important role would be interminable."[3] It is essential that, here at the outset of our analysis, you realize that nonverbal communication is a basic means of expressing what a person is thinking and feeling.

While nonverbal communication is omnipresent and an essential ingredient in human interaction, we also maintain that there are some specific uses of nonverbal behavior that are worth mentioning. Let us look at a few of those so that you will see why any study of intercultural interaction must include information about nonverbal communication.

Judging Internal States

Nonverbal communication is important because people use this message system to express attitudes, feelings, and emotions. Consciously and unconsciously, intentionally and unintentionally, people make important judgments and decisions concerning the internal states of others—states they often express without words. If you see someone with a clenched fist and a grim expression, you do not need words to tell you that this person is not happy. If you hear someone's voice quaver and see his or her hands tremble, you may infer that the person is fearful or anxious, despite what he or she might say.

Your emotions—be they fear, joy, anger, or sadness—are reflected in your posture, face, and eyes, so you can express them without ever uttering a word. For this reason, most people rely heavily on what they learn through their eyes. In fact, research indicates that you will usually believe nonverbal messages instead of verbal messages when the two contradict each other.[4]

You can even evaluate the quality of your relationships according to the interpretations assigned to nonverbal messages. From tone of voice to the distance between you and your partners to the amount of touching in which you engage, you can gather clues to the closeness of your relationships. The first time you move from holding hands with your partner to touching his or her face, you are sending a message, and that message takes on added significance if your touch is returned. In short, we agree with Morreale, Spitzberg, and Barge when they write, "people use nonverbal cues to define the social and emotional nature of their relationships and interactions."[5]

Creating Impressions

Nonverbal communication is important in human interaction because it is partially responsible for creating impressions. Think for a moment of the nonverbal preparation you make for an employment interview or an important date. This preparation shows your awareness that people will draw a mental picture of you based on your appearance. Your personal experiences will also show you how often you make judgments about other people based on such things as the color of their skin, age, gender, facial expression, manner of dress, accent, and even the type of handshake they manage to administer. How you select friends and sexual partners is likewise grounded in nonverbal impressions. You often approach certain people because of how attractive you find them and avoid others because of a decision you have made concerning their appearance.

Managing Interaction

Your nonverbal actions, whether intentional or unintentional, offer you and your partner clues about your conversation. You might lean forward, point a finger, pause, and even look away from your partner as a way of directing the conversation. These and other actions communicate to your partner "when to begin a conversation, whose turn it is to speak, how to get a chance to speak, how to signal others to talk more, and how to end a conversation."[6]

To help you understand nonverbal communication and its role in intercultural communication, we will (1) define nonverbal communication, (2) list its functions, (3) offer some guidelines for studying nonverbal communication, (4) link nonverbal communication to culture, and (5) discuss the major classifications of nonverbal messages. We will begin our discussion of each category of nonverbal communication by noting some of the basic behaviors found in the dominant culture of the United States, and then relate the categories to other cultures.

Defining Nonverbal Communication

Because the central concern of this chapter is to examine how and why people communicate nonverbally, we begin with a definition of nonverbal communication. As you discovered in earlier chapters, there is no shortage of definitions for *culture* and

communication. The same proliferation is characteristic of the term *nonverbal behavior*. We shall, therefore, select a definition that is consistent with current thinking in the field and reflects the cultural orientation of this book. We propose that *nonverbal communication involves all those nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that are generated by both the source and his or her use of the environment and that have potential message value for the source or receiver.*

It is not by chance that our definition is somewhat lengthy. We wanted to offer a definition that would not only establish the boundaries of nonverbal communication but would also reflect how the process actually functions. Part of that functioning involves (1) intentional and unintentional messages, and (2) the tandem relationship between verbal and nonverbal messages.

Intentional and Unintentional Messages

Our definition permits us to include unintentional as well as intentional behavior. This approach is realistic because you send the preponderance of nonverbal messages without ever being aware that they have meaning for other people. In verbal communication, you consciously dip into your vocabulary and decide what words to use. Although you often consciously decide to smile or select a certain piece of jewelry, you also send countless messages that you never intend to be part of the transaction. For example, frowning because the sun is in your eyes may make someone mistakenly believe you are angry; leaving some shampoo in your hair could make someone think you look silly; and touching someone's hand for an extended time could cause that person to think you are flirting when that was not your intent. These are all examples of how your actions, without your blessing, can send a message to someone else. The sociologist Goffman describes this fusing of intentional and unintentional behavior:

> The expressiveness of the individual (and therefore his capacity to give impressions) appears to involve two radically different kinds of sign activity: the expression that he gives and the impression that he gives off. The first involves verbal symbols or their substitutes, which he uses admittedly and solely to convey the information that he and the other are known to attach to these symbols. This is communication in the traditional and narrow sense. The second involves a wide range of action that others can treat as symptomatic of the actor (communicator), the expectation being that the action was performed for reasons other than the information conveyed in this way.[7]

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is multidimensional activity. This multidimensional aspect is revealed in the fact that nonverbal communication does not operate in isolation, but usually interacts with verbal messages. Knapp and Hall emphasize this idea when they write, "We need to understand that separating verbal and nonverbal behavior into two separate and distinct categories is virtually impossible."[8] The interfacing of the verbal with the nonverbal is reflected in a number of ways. For example, you often use nonverbal messages to repeat a point you are trying to make verbally. If you were telling someone that what they were proposing was a bad idea, you might move your head from side to side while uttering the word "no." To use another example, you might point in a

certain direction after you have just said, "The new library is south of that building." The gestures and words have a similar meaning and reinforce one another. You can also observe the reciprocal relationship between words and actions if you tell someone that you are pleased with his or her performance at the same time as you pat the person on the shoulder.

Nonverbal communication is multidimensional activity that can be influenced by a host of factors.

STUDYING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Because the study of nonverbal communication has become part of "popular culture" in recent years, this complex and multifaceted subject is often trivialized and misunderstood. Therefore, we need to pause before pursuing the topic any further and mention some potential problems and misconceptions associated with this important area of study.

Nonverbal Communication Can Be Ambiguous

We alluded to the first problem earlier when we discussed the intentional and unintentional natures of nonverbal communication. Simply stated, nonverbal communication can be ambiguous. For example, you may engage in a random gesture (such as swatting a fly off your arm) and someone may see that action and assume you are waving at them. Wood clearly underscores the idea of ambiguity when she writes, "We can never be sure that others understand the meanings we intended to express with our nonverbal behavior."[9] Part of the ambiguity we have been talking about exists because nonverbal communication can be contextual. The ambiguity of context is clearly seen if someone brushes against you in an elevator: was it merely an accident or was it an opportunistic sexual act? Our point should be obvious: when you use or interpret nonverbal communication, you need to be aware of the ambiguous nature of this form of interaction. As Osborn and Motley tell us, "Meanings and interpretations of nonverbal behaviors often are on very shaky ground."[10] We saw that "shaky ground" when some people, both in and out of the media, interpreted a fist bump exchanged by Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama and his wife Michelle as a "terrorist greeting" instead of a simple sign of affection between a husband and wife.

Multiple Factors Can Influence Nonverbal Communication

The next problem relates to individual differences—a subject we treated in great detail in Chapter 1 when we discussed the idea that your behavior is often produced by dynamics other than your culture. With regard to nonverbal interaction, Beamer and Varner note the following: "Nonverbal communication is influenced

Nonverbal messages can be used to express attitudes, feelings, and emotions.

Spencer Grant/PhotoEdit

by a number of factors, including cultural background, socioeconomic background, education, gender, age, personal preferences and idiosyncrasies."[11] Simply stated, not all people in a particular culture engage in the same nonverbal actions, so interpretations of nonverbal communication must be carefully evaluated before generalizations can be made.

Nonverbal Communication is Contextual

The issue of the contextual nature of nonverbal communication might simply be an adjunct to our last point, in that it is once again calling your attention to the idea that "different situations or environments produce different nonverbal messages."[12] Personal observations will tell you that you behave differently at a club than you do in the lobby of a bank. It is the setting (context) that offers norms and guidelines for your interpersonal actions. When engaged in an intercultural interaction, keep this notion of context in mind as you try to decide the meaning behind the nonverbal cues you are receiving.

Nonverbal Communication and Culture

The reason we have included an entire chapter on the subject of nonverbal communication is succinctly stated and illustrated by Ferraro in the following paragraph:

> Certain messages can be sent in a number of different ways by different cultures. For example, whereas in the United States we signify affirmation by nodding, the very same message is sent by throwing the head back in Ethiopia, by sharply thrusting the head forward among the Semang of Malaya, and by raising the eyebrows among the Dyaks of Borneo.[13]

Rosenblatt expressed this same idea by noting, "What emotions are felt, how they are expressed, and how they are understood are matters of culture."[14] What is key in Rosenblatt's sentence is that your culture has taught you what nonverbal actions to display (crying or laughing), the meaning of those actions (sadness or happiness), and the contextual backdrop of those actions (funeral or wedding). Our main thesis should be clear: nonverbal communication "plays a crucial and necessary part in communicative interactions between people from different cultures."[15]

As students of intercultural communication, learning about the alliance between culture and nonverbal behavior will help you improve the manner in which you engage in intercultural interactions. Hall underscores the need to learn about nonverbal communication in the following manner:

> I remain convinced that much of our difficulty with people in other countries stems from the fact that so little is known about cross-cultural communication. . . . Formal training in the language, history, government, and customs is only a first step. Of equal importance is an introduction to the nonverbal language of the country. Most Americans are only dimly aware of this silent language, even though they use it every day.[16]

By understanding cultural differences in nonverbal behavior, you will not only be able to understand some of the messages being generated during the interaction, but you will also be able to gather clues about underlying attitudes and values. You have already seen that nonverbal communication often reveals basic cultural traits. Smiling and shaking hands tells us that a culture values amiability. How far people stand from each other during normal conversation can offer clues to their views on privacy. Bowing tells you that a culture values formality, rank, and status. It is not by chance that Hindus greet each other by placing their palms together in front of themselves while tilting their heads slightly downward; this salutation reflects their belief that the deity exists in everyone.

The connection between nonverbal communication and culture is made even more apparent if you recall from Chapter 1 that culture is invisible, omnipresent, and learned. Nonverbal communication has these same qualities. Hall alerts us to the invisible aspect of culture and nonverbal communication by employing phrases such as "silent language" and "hidden dimension." Andersen makes much the same point by stating, "Individuals are aware of little of their own nonverbal behavior, which is enacted mindlessly, spontaneously, and unconsciously."[17] Both of these scholars are saying that much of your nonverbal behavior, like culture, tends to be elusive, spontaneous, and frequently beyond your awareness. We also remind you that culture is all pervasive, multidimensional, and boundless; it is everywhere and in everything. The same is true of nonverbal behavior.[18]

Another parallel between culture and nonverbal behavior is that both are instinctive and learned. Although much of outward behavior is innate (such as smiling, moving, touching, and eye contact), you are not born with a knowledge of the communication dimensions associated with nonverbal messages.

Let us offer a few words about some exceptions to this notion before we develop this relationship between learning and nonverbal communication. Research supports the view that because people are all one species, a general and common genetic inheritance produces universal facial expressions for most basic emotions (for example, fear, happiness, anger, surprise, disgust, and sadness).[19] Most scholars would agree, however,

CONSIDER THIS

Below are some nonverbal dimensions. Take each of these dimensions and think of an example of how the dimension communicates a meaning in the dominant culture of the United States. Then go through the same list and think of an example from a culture different from your own.

Appearance/Posture/Gestures/Facial Expression/Eye Contact/Touch/Paralanguage/Space and Distance/Time/Silence

that "cultures formulate display rules that dictate when, how, and with what consequences nonverbal expressions will be exhibited."[20] Macaronis summarized this important principle in the following manner: "People the world over experience the same basic emotions. But what sparks a particular emotion, how and where a person expresses it, and how people define emotions in general vary as matters of culture. In global perspective, therefore, everyday life differs not only in terms of how people think and act, but how they infuse their lives with feelings."[21]

Classifications of Nonverbal Communication

Before we begin to break down nonverbal communication into a series of categories, we must once again remind you of the unified nature of the categories. As Richmond, McCracken, and Payne point out, "Messages generated by each category do not exist in isolation but rather exist in the company of messages from other categories, verbal messages, contexts, and people functioning as message receivers."[22] Most classifications divide nonverbal messages into two comprehensive categories: those that are primarily produced by the body (appearance, movement, facial expressions, eye contact, touch, and paralanguage), and those that the individual combines with the setting (space, time, and silence).

Body Behavior

THE INFLUENCE OF APPEARANCE

From hair sprays to hairpieces, from reducing diets to twenty-four-hour fitness centers, from false eyelashes to blue contact lenses, and from plastic surgery on all parts of the body to tanning salons that might contribute to skin cancer, people show their concern for how they appear to others. So intense is our desire to influence the "messages" we send with our bodies that in the United States nearly fourteen million people spent almost $10 billion on cosmetic surgery and Botox™ injections.[23] In addition, the Academy of Dermatology estimates "that twenty-four percent of Americans between the ages of eighteen and fifty have at least one tattoo."[24] Keating clearly underscores the sway your outer shell has on others when she writes, "The power of communication to draw others near or to drive them away derives as much from how we appear as from the language we deploy."[25]

As you would suspect, concern with personal appearance is not unique to the United States. As Peoples and Bailey point out, "People around the world are highly creative in altering their physical appearance."[26] And we should add that they have been doing

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An important component of appearance is the perception of attractiveness and beauty.

so for a long time. As far back as the Upper Paleolithic period (about forty thousand years ago), your ancestors were using bones for necklaces and other bodily ornaments. From that period to the present, historical and archaeological evidence has shown that people are fixated on their bodies. They have painted them, fastened objects to them, dressed them, undressed them, and even deformed and mutilated them in the name of beauty. As the anthropologist Keesing has written, "The use of the body for decoration appears to be a cultural universal."[27] Face painting is still common in parts of Africa, in South America, and among some Native American tribes. In Ethiopia and Eritrea, many women still utilize facial tattoos as "beauty marks."[28] In India, many women place red dots on their foreheads to show they are married. And, of course, many women in the United States use various forms of facial makeup to enhance their appearance. For men, the wearing of beards has a long cultural tradition. In many cultures (such as Hasidic Jews, Sikhs, Mennonites, Amish, and some Muslim sects), it is an expression of a religious belief.

JUDGMENTS OF BEAUTY

An important component of appearance is the perception of attractiveness and beauty. Studies show that in the United States, being overweight reduces one's income, lowers one's chances of getting married, and helps decrease the amount of education one

receives.[29] One study pointed out that people make decisions about the future success of blind dates based completely on physical appearance.[30] Ruben noted that people use a person's attractiveness to make inferences (often faulty) about that individual's "intelligence, gender, age, approachability, financial well-being, class, tastes, values, and cultural background."[31] In intercultural communication, appearance is important because, as Gardiner and Kosmitzki observe, "One's body image and the satisfaction with it result from comparisons with an implicit cultural ideal and standard."[32] As you would suspect, the ideal varies from culture to culture. In the United States, people tend to value the appearance of tall, slender women and men with muscular bodies.[33] As Ferraro states, in the United States "people spend millions of dollar each year on running shoes, diet plans, appetite suppressants, and health spa memberships to help them take off 'ugly pounds.' "[34] This notion of leanness and trimness as a sign of attractiveness is not the rule in all cultures. For example, in large parts of Africa, plumpness is considered a sign of beauty, health, and wealth, and slimness is evidence of unhappiness, disease, or mistreatment at the hands of one's husband.[35] Among the Chinese, you can see yet another cultural standard for female attractiveness. As Wenzhong and Grove note, "Many women keep their hairstyles simple (often one or two braids) and make little attempt to draw attention to themselves through self-decoration such as colorful scarves, jewelry, or makeup."[36]

The judgment of beauty across cultures is a perception that is ripe for ethnocentrism. What happens, according to the anthropologist Ferraro, is that "people intolerant of different cultural practices often fail to realize that had they been raised in one of those other cultures, they would be practicing those allegedly disgusting or irrational customs."[37] As we have just noted, one of those "customs" is what constitutes "beauty." Remland offers an excellent example of the link between ethnocentrism and beauty when he reminds us, "what is seen as beautiful in one culture may look hideous to people from another culture."[38] Remland adds:

> The many exotic rituals we often see in PBS documentaries or in the pages of National Geographic, such as neck stretching, lip enlargements, earlobe plugs, teeth filing, and so on, represent the beautifying practices common in many parts of the world. Of course, liposuction, hair implants, facelifts, laser surgery, and the like, while not the least bit extraordinary to many Westerners, may seem abhorrent to people from other parts of the world.[39]

Because cultures are dynamic and always in a state of flux, it will be interesting to observe if perceptions of attractiveness begin to change in Japan, Africa, Russia, India, China, and even Iraq as those cultures come into greater contact with Western media. Or perhaps the opposite might happen. Westerners might well alter their perceptions of what is attractive.

THE MESSAGES OF SKIN COLOR

Skin color is perhaps the most obvious example of how general appearance is linked to perception and communication. As Vazquez points out, "skin color is the first racial marker children recognize and can be considered the most salient of phenotypic attributes."[40] This indicator is important to intercultural communication in that skin color draws attention to the idea of differences.[41] Knapp and Hall note, "In many respects, permanent skin colors have been the most potent body stimulus for determining interpersonal responses in our culture."[42] Skin color "may also be the basis of the allocation

of economic and psychological privileges to individuals relative to the degree those privileges are awarded to valued members of the dominant culture."[43]

THE MESSAGES OF ATTIRE

The use of clothing goes well beyond protection from the elements; it is often a form of communication. In the United States, as Adler and Rodman state, "Clothing can be used to convey economic status, education, social status, moral standards, athletic ability and/or interests, belief system (political, philosophical, religious), and level of sophistication"[44] In the United States, you can also observe how clothing can be a sign of group identification. Whether it is a uniform, the sweatshirt of a favorite football team, the specific tilt of a baseball cap, or the attire of the hip-hop co-culture, clothing attempts to tell other people something about your identity. Among gang members in East Los Angeles, even something as simple as the color of a bandana is a statement of group affiliation—blue for Crips and red for Bloods.[45] We can observe the subtlety of color in how the men of Iraq "tell others" about their status and affiliations by the colors on their *kaffiyas* (headpieces). An all-white *kaffiya* means the person wearing the headpiece has not yet made the pilgrimage to Mecca (as discussed in Chapter 3). What we have shown thus far is that attire, whether used as military dress, signs of status, or costumes, offers clues into a culture's view of the world.[46] For example, in Malaysia women often wear something called a *baju kurung*. This garment is loose fitting and somewhat formless, and does not reveal the contours of the body. An even more extreme expression of feminine modesty through attire is seen among women in many Middle Eastern countries. In some instances, "Muslim girls are not allowed to participate in swimming classes because of the prohibitions against exposing their bodies."[47]

Robert Fonseca

In much of the world, people still dress in their traditional attire.

Al-Kaysi develops this point in more detail when he speaks of the links between modesty and dress among Muslim women: "The main garment must be a 'flowing' one, that is, a woman must avoid tight or clinging clothes which exaggerate her figure, or any part of it, such as breasts, legs or arms."[48] Many Arab women also cover their hair with a scarf (called *hijab*) and in some very orthodox areas may even cover their entire face. These head coverings have been a point of contention in some non-Muslim countries. For example, in many European nations, there have been government attempts to ban the veils from being worn in public places.[49]

The link between cultural values and clothing is also seen among Filipinos. Gochenour tells us, "Values relating to status and authority are the root of the Filipino's need to dress correctly."[50] Of the German culture, Hall and Hall write:

> Correct behavior is symbolized by appropriate and very conservative dress. The male business uniform is a freshly pressed dark suit and tie with a plain shirt and dark shoes and socks. It is important to emulate this conservative approach to both manners and dress. Personal appearance, like the exterior appearance of their homes, is very important to Germans.[51]

Much of the same concern for appearance in dress can be found in Argentina, where "elegant clothes are very important."[52] Morrison, Conaway, and Douress note that Argentines "pride themselves on dressing as fashionably as refined Parisians and Milanese.[53]

The Spanish link appearance to one's rank, as Ruch asserts: "Historically, dress has denoted social status."[54] In Spain, it is not uncommon to see people of high status wearing a suit and tie in very hot weather. Perhaps nowhere in the world is the merger between attire and a culture's value system more evident than in Japan. McDaniel makes the connection when he writes, "The general proclivity for conservative dress styles and colors emphasizes the nation's collectivism and, concomitantly, lessens the potential for social disharmony arising from nonconformist attire."[55]

In much of the world, people still dress in their traditional garments. Clothing styles, according to Peoples and Bailey "have historically served as the most overt single indicator of ethnic identity."[56] Whether it be the women of Guatemala wearing their colorful blouses (*huipils)* or African men in white *dashikis*, traditional garments are still common in many cultures. The dress of Arab men is a perfect example of cultural identity and dress. For many Arabs, correct attire would "include a long loose robe called a *dishdasha* or *thobe* and a headpiece, a white cloth *kaffiya* banded by a black *egal* to secure it."[57]

As we have noted, for Muslims clothing is much more than apparel to cover the body. As Torrawa points out, garments often reflect important values of the Arab culture.[58] As is the case with so many aspects of culture, there is often a "below the surface" reason for cultural behaviors. This deep structure and its tie to attire in the Arab world are eloquently explained by Torrawa:

> In all its guises, clothing inscribes ideologies of truth and deception, echoing the words of scripture, and revealing—and unraveling—that honor can only be attained when every robe donned is a robe of honor and every garment a garment of piety.[59]

Whether they are Sikhs in white turbans, women in Iran wearing their *hijabs*, the Japanese in kimonos, Hasidic Jews in black yarmulkes, or the black attire of the Amish in the United States, you need to learn to be tolerant of others' external differences and not let them impede communication.

BODY MOVEMENT (KINESICS)

It is an obvious understatement to say that "actions communicate." Imai clearly underscores the pervasive use of actions as a form of communication when he writes:

> The world is a giddy montage of vivid gestures—traffic police, street vendors, expressway drivers, teachers, children on playgrounds, athletes with their exuberant hugging, clenched fists and 'high fives.' People all over the world use their hands, heads, and bodies to communicate expressively.[60]

The basic assumption of this important message system is expressed by Morreale, Spitzberg, and Barge: "How people hold themselves, stand, sit, and walk communicates strong nonverbal messages. Whether you intend to send a message or not, every move you make potentially communicates something about you to others."[61] The study of how movement communicates is called *kinesics*. Kinesic cues are those visible body shifts and movements that can send messages about your attitude toward the other person (leaning forward to indicate you are comfortable with him or her), your emotional state (tapping on a table if you are nervous), and your desire to control your environment (waving your hand to ward off a mosquito).

In attempting to understand the power and influence of body movement, a few practical principles need to be mentioned.[62] First, it should be remembered that in most instances, the messages the body generates operate only in combination with other messages. People usually smile and say hello to a friend at the same time. In Mexico, when asking someone to wait for "just a minute" (*un momento, por favor*), the speaker also makes a fist and then extends the thumb and index finger so that they form a sideways "U." Second, while body language is universal, you need to consider what we said earlier in the chapter when we pointed out the many nonverbal messages, and the meanings they evoke, that are culture bound. Finally, because much of it is not learned, kinesic behavior is less controllable than verbal communication. That is to say, in most instances you have at least a fraction of a second to think about what you are going to say, while a great deal of your body action is spontaneous.

Scholars have suggested that people can make as many as seven hundred thousand distinct physical signs. Hence, any attempt at cataloging them would be both frustrating and fruitless. Our purpose is simply to call your attention to the idea that while all people use movements to communicate, culture teaches you how to use and interpret these movements. In the upcoming sections, we look at a few cultural differences in posture, sitting behavior, and movements of the body that convey specific meanings (gestures).

POSTURE

Posture can signal whether or not people are paying attention, the degree of status in the encounter, and even how much they like or dislike each other.[63] Posture can also reveal religious practices (sitting, kneeling, bowing, etc.), feelings of submissiveness, and even sexual intentions.[64] A recent study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* revealed "that body posture may be as important as the face in communicating emotions such as fear."[65] Think for a moment of all the meanings associated with slouching, being stiff, slumping over, crouching, kneeling, pulling back one's shoulders, twitching one's legs, and the like.

On an intercultural level, posture can offer insight into a culture's value system and deep structure. You can observe this bond between culture and movement by looking at the Japanese, Thai, and Indian cultures. In Japan and other Asian cultures, the bow is much more than a greeting. It signifies that culture's concern with status and rank. In Japan, for example, a low bow is an indicator of respect.[66] Although it appears simple to the outsider, the bowing ritual is actually rather complicated. The person who occupies the lower station begins the bow, and his or her bow must be deeper than the other person's. The superior, on the other hand, determines when the bowing is to end. When the participants are of equal rank, they begin the bow in the same manner and end at the same time. The Thai people use a similar movement called the *wai*—made by pressing both hands close together in front of one's body, with the fingertips reaching to about neck level—to show respect. The nearer the head comes to the hands, the more respect is shown.[67] You can see yet another greeting pattern in India. Here the posture used when greeting someone is directly linked with the idea that Hindus see God in everything—including other people. The *namaste* (Indian greeting) is carried out by making a slight bow with the palms of both hands together and the fingertips at the chin.[68]

Posture is also associated with how you sit. Here, again, you can find cultural differences. As eccentric as it sounds, the way people sit is often a reflection of important cultural characteristics. In the United States, where being casual and friendly is valued, people, consciously or unconsciously, act out this value by the way they sit. As Novinger illustrates, the position for males "includes a slump and leaning back and a type of sprawl that occupies a lot of space."[69] In many countries, such as Germany and Sweden, where lifestyles tend to be more formal, slouching is considered a sign of rudeness and poor manners. In fact, according to Nees, "German children are still taught to sit and stand up straight, which is a sign of good character. Slouching is seen as a sign of a poor upbringing."[70] For the Samoan culture, the idea of respect is acted out by how one sits. For example, people show respect by positioning themselves at a lower position than the person to whom they are junior.[71] Even the manner in which you position your legs while sitting has cultural overtones. Remland offers an excellent example of this idea when he notes, "An innocent act of ankle-to-knee leg crossing, typical of most American males, could be mistaken for an insult (a showing of the sole of the foot gesture) in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Singapore, or Thailand."[72] And according to Ruch, the same seemingly simple act is considered extremely offensive in Ghana and in Turkey.[73] People in Thailand also believe there is something special about the bottoms of the feet. For them, the feet are the lowest part of the body, and they should never be pointed in the direction of another person.[74] For the Thai, the feet take on so much significance that people avoid stomping them.

Within the United States, you can also find co-cultural difference in how people move, stand, and sit during interaction. Women often hold their arms closer to their bodies than men do. They usually keep their legs closer together and seldom cross them in mixed company. Their posture is more restricted and less relaxed than the posture of males. They also tend to tip their head to one side.[75] Most of the research in the area of gender communication concludes that these differences are related to issues such as status, power, and affiliation.[76] Posture and stance also play an important role in the African-American co-culture. This is evident in the walk employed by many young African-American males. According to Hecht, Collier, and Ribeau, "The general form of the walk is slow and casual with the head elevated and tipped to one side, one arm swinging and the other held limply."[77] The walk is often used to "show

the dominant culture that you are strong and proud, despite your status in American society."[78]

CONSIDER THIS

What do you think the following gestures mean in the U.S. culture?

- *Fingers crossed*
- *Thumbs up*
- *Thumbs down*
- *Making a round ring (O) with the hand*
- *The vertical horn sign, made with fingers*
- *Pointing at a person*

Do you know of some cultures that give a different meaning to these acts?

GESTURES

Consider for a moment all of the messages people send each other by what appear to be the simplest of all movements—waving, placing hands on hips, folding arms, pointing, clenching a fist, shaking a finger, etc. The message value of gestures as a form of communication is also reflected in the fact that the deaf co-culture in the United States has a rich and extensive vocabulary composed of gestures. Another example of the power of gestures can be found in the hand signals used by various urban gangs. The slightest variation in performing a certain gesture can be the catalyst for a violent confrontation. You can see the importance of gestures in intercultural communication because some gestures that are positive, humorous, or harmless in some cultures can have the opposite meaning in other cultures. You can observe the potential for confusion and awkwardness in three quick examples. In Latin America, making the hand gesture used in the United States for "come here" (holding the hand palm up with the index finger extending in and out three or four times) can signal that you are romantically interested in the recipient of this gesture. You can also see confusion over the simple gesture of pointing. In the United States, pointing at someone usually does not carry negative connotations, but in China, it can be taken as a sign of rudeness. The "thumbs-up" gesture, which is very common in the United States, can also be misleading. In the United States, this gesture has positive connotations because it "says" "everything is okay" or "you are doing very well." However, "in most of Europe, in Australia and West Africa it is seen as a rude gesture."[79]

Because there are thousands of gestures inherent in every culture, we do not intend to offer an all-inclusive taxonomy. Such an undertaking could fill the remaining pages of this book. Therefore, instead of presenting a random catalog of gestures, we will look at (1) *pointing*, (2) *idiosyncratic gestures*, (3) *beckoning*, (4) *acceptance and understanding*, and variations related to the (5) *frequency and intensity* of the gestures.

Pointing. As we have already noted, *pointing* is a very common gesture in the United States. Americans point to objects and at people with the index finger. Directions are even given by pointing in one direction or another with the index finger. Germans point with the little finger, and the Japanese point with the entire hand, palm up. In much of the Arab world, pointing is thought to be an offensive gesture. The Navajo use their chin, and in much of Asia, pointing the index finger at a person is considered rude.[80]

Idiosyncratic gestures are those movements whose meaning is directly linked to a particular culture.

Idiosyncratic Gestures. As we have already indicated, there are a limitless number of *idiosyncratic gestures* found in each culture. These are the gestures whose meanings are the feature and property of a particular culture. In China, if you place your right hand over your heart, it means you are making a sincere promise. In Iraq, the same gesture can mean "thank you." For the French, pulling the skin down below the right eye can mean "I don't believe you." In Argentina, one twists an imaginary mustache to signify that everything is okay. In the United States, "making a circle with one's thumb and index finger while extending the others is emblematic of the word 'okay'; in Japan (and Korea) it traditionally signifies 'money' (*okane*); and among Arabs this gesture is usually accompanied by a baring of teeth, signifying extreme hostility."[81] To a Tunisian, this same gesture means, "I'll kill you."

Many gestures with sexual connotations are also tied to a certain culture. In the United States, someone might use the middle finger to send an insulting, obscene gesture. This sexual insult gesture is not universal. On the other hand, the gesture we discussed in the last paragraph (forming an "O" with the thumb and index finger) is, according to Lynch and Hanson, "an obscene gesture among some Latino cultures."[82] In the Italian culture, the gesture that refers to someone as a homosexual is made by moving the middle finger behind your ear.[83] Ferraro suggests that nonverbal ways of communicating admiration can be one of the most idiosyncratic categories of gestures. For example, "the Frenchman kisses his fingertips, the Italian twists an imaginary moustache, and the Brazilian curls one hand in front of another as if he is looking through an imaginary telescope."[84]

Beckoning. The sign we make for *beckoning*, another gesture that we take for granted, is also culturally based. In the United States, when a person wants to signal a friend to come, he or she usually makes the gesture with one hand, palm up, fingers more or less together, and moving toward the body. Koreans express this same idea by cupping "the hand with the palm down and drawing the fingers toward the palm."[85] When they see this gesture, many Americans think the other person is waving good-bye. Filipinos often summon someone with a quick downward nod of the head. In Germany and much of Scandinavia, tossing the head back comprises a beckoning motion. For many Arabs, holding the right hand out, palm upward, and opening and closing the hand is nonverbally asking someone to "come here."[86] And in Spain, to beckon someone, you stretch your arm out, palm downward, and make a scratching motion toward your body with your fingers.

Acceptance and Understanding. Head movements and gestures denoting acceptance and understanding represent another example of how some gestures are rooted in culture. In the United States, moving your head up and down is seen as a sign of understanding and agreement. This same movement can have different meanings in different cultures. As Lynch and Hanson point out, "This same gesture is interpreted quite differently in many other cultures. Among Native American, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Island groups, it often means, 'I hear you speaking.' It does not signal that the listener understands the message nor does it suggest that he or she agrees."[87] Greeks express "yes" with a nod similar to the one used in the United States, but when communicating "no," they jerk their head back and raise their faces. Lifting one or both hands up

to the shoulders strongly emphasizes the "no." And in Iraq, a quick upward head snap with a tongue click means "no." In India, gestures for "yes" and "no" also differ from those found in the United States. Indians demonstrate they agree with you by tossing the head from side to side. To show disagreement they nod up and down.[88] Both of these gestures are virtually reversed in the United States.

Frequency and Intensity. There are also cultural differences that regulate the frequency and intensity of gestures that cultures use. It is generally accepted that Italians, South Americans, most Latinos, Africans, and people from the Middle East are more nonverbally demonstrative and employ gestures with greater frequency and intensity than do cultures such as the Japanese, Chinese, Finns, and Scandinavians.[89] A few specific examples will help illustrate this point. As Falassi and Flower note, "Speaking with their hands—or all their bodies in fact—is in tune with the Italian love of theatrics, and their native gusto for social interaction."[90] Berry and his colleagues make much the same point with regard to the "exciting impression" Italians make "because of their lively movement patterns."[91] Novinger describes the animated style of gesturing in Brazil when she writes, "Brazilians say that if you tie their hands they cannot speak. They use hand gestures and broad arm gestures as they talk."[92] The same zeal toward gestures is found among Chileans. In that culture, according to Winter, gestures are used to help add meaning to conversations and to emphasize key points.[93] The use of gestures to promote meaning is also common among Arab men. Here you can see gesturing and "the waving of arms used to accompany almost every spoken word."[94] Members of many Asian cultures perceive such outward activity quite differently, often equating vigorous action with a lack of manners and restraint.[95] According to Lewis, "Arms are used very little by Nordics during conversation."[96] Germans are also made uncomfortable by bold hand gestures. These types of gestures, by their standards, are too flashy and flamboyant.[97] Ruch offers the following advice to American executives who work with German corporations: "Hands should be used with calculated dignity. They should never serve as lively instruments to emphasize points in conversation. The entire game plan is to appear calm under pressure."[98]

You can also see the significance of gestures by looking at various co-cultures. For example, as compared to males, women tend to use fewer gestures and do so with less intensity.[99] African Americans value a lively and expressive form of communication and hence display a greater variety of movements than whites when interacting.[100]

Facial Expressions

The early Greek playwrights and the Noh actors of Japan were keenly aware of the shifts in mood and meaning that facial expressions conveyed. Both forms of drama use masks and extensive makeup to demonstrate differences in each actor's character and attitude. Whether it is the Mexican adage that "One's face is the mirror of one's soul," or the Yiddish proverb that states, "The face tells the secret," people everywhere have been captivated by the face. What is fascinating about the study of the face is that you are talking about three faces. First, there is your "assigned" face, the one you are born with. While it is altered by age, health, and even cosmetics and surgery, this is your face at rest. Second is the face you are able to manipulate at will. You can decide to smile, wink, frown, and so on. Finally, you have the face that is changed by your surroundings and the messages you receive.

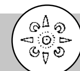
Among scholars, the importance of facial expressions is well established. From the very moment newborn infants arrive, they begin the process (which is unconscious at this stage) of "reading" the expressions on the faces that stare down at them. Calero makes this point when he writes, "Infants learn to distinguish different expressions and sense the changes in a parent's facial expressions"[101] Ferraro further accentuates the importance of facial expressions by noting that the face is so central to the process of communication that people often speak of "face-to-face" communication in the West and "losing face" in places like Japan.[102]

The reason facial cues are important is that they can reflect a course of action,[103] convey messages of "social submissiveness and dominance,"[104] tell others how interested you are, signal your degree of involvement, indicate your level of comprehension about the moment, and divulge whether or not your reactions are spontaneous or managed.[105]

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AND CULTURE

Although facial expressions play an important role in any study of intercultural communication, the specific implications of these expressions are often difficult to assess. At the core of a lingering academic debate lies this question: Is there a nearly universal language of facial expressions? One position holds that anatomically similar expressions may occur in everyone, but the meanings people attach to them differ from culture to culture.[106] The majority opinion, which we introduced earlier in the chapter, is that there are universal facial expressions for which people have similar meanings. Ekman is the driving force behind this position. He advances the following point of view: "The subtle creases of a grimace tell the same story around the world, to preliterate New Guinea tribesmen, to Japanese and American college students alike. Darwin knew it all along, but now here's hard evidence that culture does not control the face."[107] Ekman and others present the theory that there is "a basic set of at least six facial expressions that are innate, universal, and carry the same basic meaning throughout the world."[108] These six pan-cultural and universal facial expressions are happiness, sadness, fear, anger, disgust, and surprise.

Despite the biologically based nature of facial expressions, there seem to be clear cultural expectations and norms that often dictate when, where, how, and to whom facial expressions are displayed.[109] This means that different cultures construct their own rules for what are appropriate facial expressions, as well what aspects of that behavior should be attended to.[110] A few specific instances will illustrate the role of culture in the production and interpretation of facial expressions.



REMEMBER THIS

While there is a biological component to facial expressions, culture plays a major role in what produces the facial expression, how the expression is displayed, and the meaning attached to the facial expression.

SOME CULTURAL EXAMPLES

In many Mediterranean cultures, people exaggerate signs of grief or sadness. It is not uncommon in this region of the world to see men crying in public. Yet among Japanese and Chinese men, you often see a desire to hide public expressions of anger, sorrow, confusion, or disgust. As Sue and Sue point

out, "the Japanese and Chinese restraint of strong feelings (anger, irritation, sadness, and love or happiness) is considered to be a sign of maturity and wisdom."[111] Min-Sun Kim says that Koreans also withhold emotion and do not engage in animated facial expressions.[112]

The smile is yet another emotional display that is linked to one's culture. Everyone is born knowing how to smile. Yet the amount of smiling, the stimulus that produces the smile, and even what the smile is communicating often shift from culture to culture. As Kraut and Johnson note, culture can "influence smiling both by determining the interpretation of events, which affects the cause of happiness, and by shaping display roles, which determine when it is socially appropriate to smile."[113] In America, a smile can be a sign of happiness or friendly affirmation and is usually used with great regularity. In the German culture, according to Nees, a smile "is used with far more discretion, generally only with those persons one knows and really likes."[114] In the Japanese culture, the smile can also mask an emotion or be used to avoid answering a question.[115] In addition, according to Nishiyama, "the Japanese may also smile when they feel embarrassed and laugh when they want to hide their anger."[116] In Japan, people of lower status often use the smile "to denote acceptance of a command or order by a person of higher status when in fact they feel anger or contempt for the order or the person giving the order."[117] In the Korean culture, too much smiling is often perceived as a sign of a shallow person. Dresser notes that this "lack of smiling by Koreans has often been misinterpreted as a sign of hostility."[118] Thais, on the other hand, smile much of the time. In fact, Thailand has been called the "Land of Smiles."[119]

Even within a culture, there are groups that use facial expressions differently from the dominant culture. Summarizing the research on gender differences, Pearson, West, and Turner report that, when compared to men, women use more facial expressions, are more expressive, smile more, are more apt to return smiles, and are more attracted to others who smile.[120]

CONSIDER THIS

After teaching for over five years at a university in California, Adie had learned to read students' nonverbal behaviors in the classroom. For instance, she could determine from facial expressions and body posture if a student did not understand the lesson, was bored, tired, or daydreaming, or was paying close attention to what was being said. With this knowledge, Adie could continuously adjust the way she lectured in order to maintain student attention. However, when she moved to a new position at a Japanese university, she discovered that students exhibited few, if any facial expressions, and sat quietly at their desks with very good posture.

What could Adie have done in this situation in order to measure student interest during her lecture?

Eye Contact and Gaze

The eyes, and their power and influence, have always been a fascinating topic. You can see the power of eye contact when professional poker players try to hide behind their dark glasses during an important tournament. In the United States, so important are the eyes as a communication tool that a lack of eye contact between patient and health care

professional is one of the most common complaints logged against doctors. The impact of eye contact on communication is also seen in the countless number of literary and musical allusions to eyes that have been made over hundreds of years. Emerson wrote, "The eyes indicate the antiquity of the soul." Shakespeare also knew the communicative potency of the eyes when he wrote, "Thou tell'st me there is murder in mine eye." And Bob Dylan underscored the same potency in his lyrics: "Your eyes said more to me that night than your lips would ever say." Even "the evil eye" is more than just an expression. In one study, Roberts examined 186 cultures throughout the world and found that 67 of them had some belief in the evil eye.[121] Zuniga highlights the power of the evil eye (*mal ojo*) in Mexico and Puerto Rico with the following observation: "*Mal ojo* is believed to be the result of excessive admiration and desire on the part of another. Mothers may isolate their children for fear of having one become a victim of *mal ojo*."[122] The Korean culture also has a distinctive approach to eye contact that underscores its significance to human communication. They have the term *nunch'i*, which means communicating with the eyes. This style of eye contact is so important that Robinson maintains it causes "miscommunication between Westerners and all Asians."[123]

Another reason the eyes are so important to the communication process is that the number of messages you can send with your eyes is nearly limitless. We have all heard some of the following words used to describe a person's eyes: *direct*, *sensual*, *sardonic*, *expressive*, *intelligent*, *penetrating*, *sad*, *cheerful*, *worldly*, *hard*, *trusting*, and *suspicious*.

EYE CONTACT AND THE DOMINANT CULTURE

Before offering some cultural comparisons that demonstrate how culture can affect eye contact, we shall briefly discuss how eye contact is used by the dominant culture in the United States, where eyes serve a number of communication functions. Eyes express emotions, monitor feedback,[124] indicate degrees of attentiveness, influence changes in attitude, define power and status relationships, and take on a central role in impression management."[125] The manner in which these "functions" are carried out is also altered by culture. For example, in the United States, as Triandis notes, looking another person directly in the eye is very common.[126] Not only is it the rule, but for most members of the dominant culture, eye contact is highly valued.[127] There is even a tendency in North America to be suspicious of someone who does not follow the culturally prescribed rules for direct eye contact. In fact, gaze avoidance is usually associated with "a lack of interest, dishonesty, slyness, and negative attitudes."[128] So important is this interpersonal skill that one popular communication textbook offered the following advice to its readers: "You can improve your eye contact by becoming conscious of looking at people when you are talking to them. If you find your eyes straying away from that person, work to regain direct contact."[129] The key word in the previous sentence is *direct*. For, as you shall learn in the following few paragraphs, eye contact and all its variations represent important variables in the study of culture and communication.[130]

SOME CULTURAL EXAMPLES

In many cultures, direct eye contact is a taboo or an insult. In Japan, for example, prolonged eye contact is considered rude, threatening, disrespectful,[131] and even a sign of belligerence.[132] It is not uncommon for the Japanese to look down or away or even close their eyes, while engaging in conversation. You can probably appreciate the problems that might arise if Americans are not aware of the Japanese use of eye contact. As

Richmond and her associates point out, many Americans often interpret Japanese eye contact, or lack of it, "as signs of disagreement, disinterest, or rejection."[133]

Among people from Mediterranean cultures, we find yet another attitude toward eye contact. Some of these features are highlighted by Lewis:

> Mediterranean people use their eyes in many different ways for effect. These include glaring (to show anger), glistening eyes (to show sincerity), winking (very common in Spain and France to imply conspiracy) and the eyelash flutter (used by women to reinforce persuasion).[134]

Dresser notes that "people from Latin American and Caribbean cultures also avoid eye contact as a sign of respect."[135] This same orientation toward eye contact is found in Africa. Richmond and Gestrin tell us, "Making eye contact when communicating with a person who is older or of higher status is considered a sign of disrespect or even aggression in many parts of Africa, where respect is shown by lowering the eyes."[136] There is even a Zulu saying that states, "The eye is an organ of aggression." India and Egypt provide two good examples of eye contact mirroring a cultural value. According to Luckmann, "In India, the amount of eye contact that is appropriate depends on one's social position (people of different socioeconomic classes avoid eye contact with each other)."[137] In Egypt, the issue is not social status but gender. "Women and men who are strangers may avoid eye contact out of modesty and respect for religious rules."[138] We should point out, at least as it applies to gender, that we agree with Tuleja when she notes that the use of eye contact involving women is "changing as more women throughout the world enter the job market and rise to higher levels."[139]

Potential problems can arise when Asians and Westerners interact with cultures whose members practice prolonged eye contact with their communication counterpart. For example, Lonner and Malpass note, "In the Middle East, relatively extended gaze exchanges are considered appropriate during exchanges between men."[140] Members of these cultures believe such contact shows their interest in the other person and helps them assess the truthfulness of the other person's words.[141] Germans also engage in very direct eye contact. This point, and some of the problems that can arise from this behavior, are noted by Nees: "Germans will look you directly in the eye while talking, which some Americans find vaguely annoying or disconcerting. From the German point of view, this is a sign of honesty and true interest in the conversation. For Americans it can seem too intense and direct."[142]

In North America, the prolonged stare is often a part of the nonverbal code used by the gay male co-culture. When directed toward a member of the same sex, an extended stare, like certain other nonverbal messages, is often perceived as a signal of interest and sexual suggestion.[143] A few other differences in the use of eye contact in the United States are worth noting. Sue and Sue indicate that eye contact, or a lack of it, can create misunderstandings between African Americans and members of the dominant culture. The reason is simple: African Americans often do not find it necessary to engage in direct eye contact at all times during a conversation.[144] The Hopi interpret direct eye contact as offensive and usually will avoid any type of staring. The Navajos dislike sustained eye contact so strongly that they have incorporated it into their creation myth. The myth, which tells the story of a "terrible monster called He-Who-Kills-With-His Eyes," teaches the Navajo child that "a stare is literally an evil eye and implies a sexual and aggressive assault."[145] This same uncomfortable feeling toward direct and prolonged eye contact can be found among Mexican Americans. As Purnell and Paulanka note, "Mexican Americans consider sustained eye contact when speaking directly to someone

How you respond to space is linked directly to your culture.

Photodisc/Getty Images

rude. Direct eye contact with superiors may be interpreted as insolence. Avoiding direct eye contact with superiors is a sign of respect."[146]

Among members of the dominant culture, there also are gender variations in how people use their eyes to communicate. For example, "Both sexes signal interest and involvement with others by making eye contact, but men also use it to challenge others or to assert their status and power."[147] In addition, research on the subject indicates that in most instances, women maintain more eye contact than men do; women look at other women more and hold eye contact longer with one another than do men.[148] We should add that gender characteristics regarding eye contact vary from culture to culture. As we noted earlier, in cultures where gender segregation is the norm (such as Saudi Arabia) direct eye contact between men and women is avoided.[149]

As you might imagine, eye contact is a very important consideration when communicating with a member of the deaf community who is employing American Sign Language. Among deaf people who are "signing," there is a belief that "eye contact is the most important part of communication."[150] Turning your back to people who are signing is essentially the same as ignoring them. So delicate is the use of eye contact that you seldom realize the modifications you make. For example, the next time you are talking with a disabled person, perhaps someone in a

REMEMBER THIS

Cultures that employ very direct eye contact

- *Middle Eastern*
- *French*
- *German*
- *Dominant U.S. culture*
- *Deaf co-cultures*

Cultures that employ nominal eye contact

- *Korean*
- *Japanese*
- *African*
- *Native Americans*
- *East Indians*

wheelchair, notice how little eye contact you make with that person as compared with someone who is not disabled. This practice is not a good idea, because it reflects a lack of interest and concern.

Touch

Being touched and touching are compelling communication devices. "Touch is the oldest, most primitive and pervasive sense. It's the first sense we experience in the womb and the last one we lose before death."[151] Whether your touch behavior is conscious or unconscious, the act of touching is a reflection of what you are feeling and experiencing at the moment. Hence, the meanings you assign to being touched, and your reasons for touching others, offer insights into the communication encounter. This is vividly illustrated by the character Holden Caulfield in the American classic *The Catcher in the Rye:*

> I held hands with her all the time. This doesn't sound like much, but she was terrific to hold hands with. Most girls, if you hold hands with them, their goddam hand *dies* on you, or else they think they have to keep *moving* their hand all the time, as if they were afraid they'd bore you or something.[152]

So important is touch to human communication that researchers know that infants who are denied a caregiver's touch can develop serious biological and emotional problems.[153] In short, touch, or lack of it, can influence a baby's physical, emotional, and cognitive development.[154] As you move from infancy into childhood, you learn the rules of touching. You are taught whom to touch and where they may be touched. By the time you reach adolescence, your culture has taught you the "rules" of touch behavior and how to communicate with touch. You have learned about shaking hands by employing various types of handshakes—firm, gentle, etc. You even have become skilled at knowing who to hug and the intensity and location associated with each person you are hugging (parent, friend, lover). Culture has also "taught you" what occasions (greeting, expression of affection, etc.) call for a hug. The "rules" of touching are so specific that in the United States you have learned a hierarchy associated with touching. As Chaney and Martin note, "People of higher rank (the president of the company) may touch those of lower rank (office employees), but secretaries may not touch the president."[155]

In the dominant culture of the United States, there are five basic categories of touch behavior. (1) *Professional touching* is carried out by individuals such as doctors, nurses, and hairdressers. (2) *Social politeness* touching is usually associated with greeting and showing appreciation. (3) *Friendship touches* demonstrate concern and caring between family members and close friends. (4) The name *love-intimacy touches* is given to those types of touches (caressing, hugging, embracing, kissing, and the like) that usually occur in romantic relationships. (5) Finally, *sexual touching* is touch on the most intimate level, used for sexual arousal.[156]

SOME CULTURAL EXAMPLES

We have just mentioned some of the rules of touch as it applies to the dominant culture, but in addition, each culture has subtle directives concerning how to use this personal means of communication. As Ferraro points out, "Every culture has a well-defined set of

meanings connected with touching. That is, each culture defines who can touch whom, on what parts of the body, and under what circumstances."[157] For proof of Ferraro's observation, you need only watch the news on television or visit an international airport to confirm that there are major differences in how cultures use touch, even in the simple act of greeting or saying good-bye. Drawing from a study involving cultural differences in touch behavior among couples at an international airport, Andersen offers the following narrative of some of the findings:

> A family leaving for Tonga formed a circle, wove their arms around each other's back, and prayed and chanted together. A tearful man returning to Bosnia repeatedly tried to leave his sobbing wife; each time he turned back to her, they would grip each other by the fingertips and exchange a passionate, tearful kiss and a powerful embrace. Two Korean couples departed without any touch, despite the prolonged separation that lay ahead of them.[158]

Let us look at a few other cultural examples. Arabs employ a great deal of touching behavior as part of their communication style.[159] In fact, it is not uncommon to see men in such places as Saudi Arabia walking along holding hands. People in much of Eastern Europe, Spain, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Israel, and the Arab world hug and kiss when they meet family and friends. However, as West and Turner note, "such overt touching would be frowned upon in Japan or Scandinavia."[160] And as we have said elsewhere, because of religious and social traditions, those Arabs who are Muslims eat and do other things with the right hand, but do not greet (touch) with the left hand because this is a social insult. The left hand is used to engage in basic biological functions.

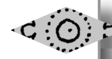
In some cultures, touch can have a religious meaning. Dresser offers the following observation regarding touching the head: "Many Asian people believe the head houses the soul. Therefore, when another person touches their head, it places them in jeopardy. It is prudent for outsiders to avoid touching the heads and upper torsos of Asians."[161]

South America and Mexico are two places where touch is routine. Brazilians, for example, engage in "embraces and back-thumping between men."[162] Brazilians also "kiss each other on alternating cheeks."[163] And in Mexico, a warm embrace called *abrazo* can be seen throughout the country.[164] Condon adds, "Hugs, pats on backs, and other physical contact are an important part of communication in Mexico."[165] This same employment of touch as a form of communication is also found in Costa Rica, where women greet each other with a kiss on one cheek and a hand on the shoulder.[166]

Touching is not a form of greeting in much of Southeast Asia, and people in these cultures engage in very little physical contact during the course of a conversation. In China, men and women seldom "show physical affection in public."[167] When describing business practices in Japan, Rowland asserts, "Touching fellow workers and associates is not common in Japan. Patting someone on the back or putting a friendly arm around them is not done."[168] Even the simple act of kissing has cultural overtones. Although mouth-to-mouth kissing, as a sexual act, is common in most Western cultures, it is not widespread in many parts of Asia. In fact, the Japanese have for centuries rhapsodized about the appeal of the nape of the neck as an erotic zone. The Japanese language has no word for "kiss," so the English word has been borrowed and *kisu* is now used.

You can also find gender differences in how touch is used as a form of communication. This is clearly demonstrated in gender discrepancies. Morreale, Spitzberg, and Barge summarize the research on these differences in the following manner: "Women are more likely to hug and use touch to express support and affiliation. Men use touch to assert power or

express sexual desires, and men tend to touch females more than females touch males."[169] In recent years gender differences as they apply to touch, particularly in the workplace, have become the source of many sexual-harassment cases. A male colleague who strokes a female co-worker on the arm, or even pats her on the back, might be perceived as engaging in sexual or condescending behavior. All we are suggesting is that touching often carries multiple meanings and that it might be inappropriate in the workplace.

IMAGINE THIS 

John, an American from California, has received a very high-paying teaching position in an all-male private school in Saudi Arabia. Because he wants to make a good impression and have his students like him, he goes from student to student, introduces himself, and shakes hands in the same manner he used when he taught in California. The next day the dean of students calls John into his office and asks him to leave the school.

What happened?

Some cultural differences regarding gender become clear when you interact with other cultures. Regarding males, Novinger points out those differences when she writes, "An orthodox Jew or a fundamentalist Muslim will not shake hands with (touch) a woman as a greeting or when being introduced, because such touch of a non-family female is not culturally permitted."[170]

Co-cultures within the United States often employ touch in ways that are unique to their members. A limited number of studies reveal that African Americans engage in more interpersonal touch than do whites.[171] And, Leathers says, one study has shown that "black females touch each other almost twice as often as white females."[172] We should note in closing that many African Americans become annoyed if a white person pats them on the top of the head. They believe it carries the same meaning as being told, in a condescending manner, that they are "a good little boy or girl."

Paralanguage

When the German poet Klopstock wrote, "The tones of human voices are mightier than strings or brass to move the soul," he knew that the sounds we generate often communicate more than just the meanings of our words. Most of you probably have viewed a foreign film with subtitles. During those intervals when the subtitles were not on the screen, you heard the actors speaking an unfamiliar language but could understand some of what was happening just from the sound of the voices. Perhaps you inferred that the performers were expressing anger, sorrow, or joy, or recognized who the hero was and who was cast in the role of the villain. The rise and fall of voices also may have told you when one person was asking a question and when another was making a statement or issuing a command. Whatever the case, certain vocal cues provided you with information with which to make judgments about the characters' personalities, emotional states, ethnic background, and rhetorical activity. To be sure, you could only guess at the exact meaning of the words being spoken, but voice inflections still told you a great deal about what was happening. When we leave the analogy of watching a foreign film and move to day-to-day interaction, we find that the same sort of non-linguistic messages have an impact. In fact, research reveals that how a person's voice sounds can influence

REMEMBER THIS

Paralanguage is concerned with the communicative characteristics of the voice and with how people use their voices. Paralanguage includes such things as giggles, laughter, accents, groans, sighs, pitch, tempo, volume, and resonance.

perceptions related to social class and credibility.[173] It can also influence the comprehension and retention of the words being spoken.[174] What we have been talking about is a small part of what is called *paralanguage*. It denotes the features that accompany speech and contribute to the meanings people assign to the overall transaction. Most classifications divide paralanguage into three categories: (1) *vocal qualifiers* (volume, pitch, tempo, resonance, tone); (2) *vocal characterizers* (laughing, crying, moaning, whining, yawning); and (3) *vocal segregates* ("uh-huh," "shh," "uh," "oooh," "mmmh," "hmmm"). Let now briefly examine each of these components and assess their influence on intercultural communication.

VOCAL QUALITIES

It is extraordinary how many inferences about content and character can be made just from the paralinguistic sounds people produce. For example, paralanguage cues assist you in drawing conclusions about an individual's emotional state, socioeconomic status, height, ethnicity, weight, age, intelligence, race, regional background, and educational level.[175] Let's pause for a moment and look at some of the paralanguage messages you send and receive that have message value for a particular culture.

While vocal qualities have numerous components, cultural differences are most apparent in the use of volume. A few examples will illustrate this point. Arabs speak with a great deal of volume because for them it connotes strength and sincerity. As Triandis notes, "Arabs believe that loud and clear is 'sincere' and soft is 'devious.'"[176] For Brazilians, speaking loudly signifies "interest and involvement."[177] Ruch says Germans conduct their business with a "commanding tone that projects authority and self-confidence."[178] On the other end of the continuum, there are cultures that have a very different view toward loud voices. For example, Chaney and Martin note, "People from the Philippines speak softly, as they believe that this is an indication of good breeding and education."[179] And Remland observes, "Britons generally prefer a quieter, less intrusive volume than persons from many other cultures."[180] A visitor from Thailand once asked one of the authors if the loud voices she was hearing in America meant Americans were upset or mad at something. Her question made a great deal of cultural sense. As Cooper and Cooper note, in Thailand "a loud voice is perceived as being impolite."[181] In Japan, raising one's voice often implies a lack of self-control. For the Japanese, a gentle and soft voice reflects good manners and helps maintain social harmony—two important values in Japanese culture.

Co-cultures also use vocal qualifiers in subtle and unique ways. For example, many African Americans use more inflection, are more intense and more dynamic, and have a greater emotional range in their use of voice than most white Americans.[182] Differences in paralanguage also mark the communication patterns of males and females. In several studies, females evidenced a faster rate of speech than men and used fewer silent pauses while speaking.[183] After reviewing numerous studies on gender differences in the use of voice, Pearson, West, and Turner concluded that females speak at a higher pitch than men, speak more softly, are more expressive, pronounce the

complete "ing" ending to words, and come closer to standard speech norms.[184] Women also have greater variation in their voices when they speak than do men.[185]

VOCAL CHARACTERISTICS

As noted, vocal characteristics are vocalizations that convey a learned meaning for members of a specific culture. For example, the seemingly natural act of sneezing "is considered in Islam a blessing from God."[186] The rationale for this sound's having religious overtones goes to the heart of Islam. Because all actions are God's will, sneezing is an action triggered by God. In fact, after the sneeze a Muslim would say *Al-hamdu illah* (praise and thanks to God). Laughing also sends different messages, depending on the culture. Lynch and Hanson do an excellent job of noting this difference when they write:

> Laughing and giggling are interpreted as expressions of enjoyment among most Americans—signals that people are relaxed and having a good time . . . Among other cultural groups, such as Southeast Asians, the same behavior may be a sign of extreme embarrassment, discomfort, or what Americans might call "nervous laughter" taken to the extreme.[187]

VOCAL SEGREGATES

Much like vocal characteristics, vocal segregates—sounds that are audible but are not actual words—fall into this category of paralanguage. In some instances, these sounds have very little meaning and are used as substitutes for words. A case in point is the overused "uh" sound produced by many Americans when they can't locate a specific word. However, in many cultures these sounds take on a special meaning. For instance, the Maasai also use a number of sounds that have special significance, the most common one being the "eh" sound, which the Maasai draw out and which can mean "yes," "I understand," or "continue."[188] In Kenya, the "iya" sound tells the other person that everything is okay; in Jamaica, the "kissing" or "sucking" sound expresses anger, exasperation, or frustration. The Japanese also make ample use of vocal segregates in their conversations. To demonstrate reluctance or concern, a Japanese worker might "suck in his breath, look doubtful and say 'Sah . . .' "[189] The Japanese will also make small utterances to demonstrate their attentiveness, such as *hai* (yes, certainly, all right, very well), *so* which has the same sound as the English "so" (I hear that, or an indication of agreement), or *eto* (well . . . or let me see . . .)[190]

Having previously examined how body movement communicates, we now move to a review of how space, time, and silence communicate. Although these variables are external to the communicator, they are used and manipulated in ways that send messages. For example, imagine your reaction to someone who stands too close to you, arrives late for an important appointment, or remains silent after you reveal some personal information. In each of these instances, you would find yourself reading meaning into your communication partner's use of (1) *space and distance*, (2) *time*, and (3) *silence*.

Space and Distance

The flow and shift of distance between you and the people with whom you interact are as much a part of the communication experience as the words being sent back and forth. The study of this message system, called *proxemics*, is concerned with such things

as (1) *personal space*, (2) *seating*, and (3) *furniture arrangement*. All three have an influence on intercultural communication.

PERSONAL SPACE

The significance of personal space as a form of communication is clearly articulated by Hall and Hall in the following paragraph:

> Each person has around him an invisible bubble of space which expands and contracts depending on his relationship to those around him, his emotional state, his cultural background, and the activity he is performing. Few people are allowed to penetrate this bit of mobile territory, and then only for short periods of time.[191]

Your personal space, then, is that piece of the universe you occupy and call your own. As the owner of this area, you usually decide who may enter and who may not. When your space is invaded, you react in a variety of ways. You may retreat, stand your ground even as your hands become moist from nervousness, or sometimes even react violently.

Your use of personal space, like so much of your communication behavior, is learned on both the conscious and unconscious level. The anthropologist Edward T. Hall attempted to classify how personal space was used in North America by proposing four categories that he labeled (1) *intimate*, (2) *casual-personal*, (3) *social*, and (4) *public*.[192] Each of these categories demonstrates how space can communicate. Intimate distance (actual contact to eighteen inches) is normally reserved for very personal relationships. You can reach out and touch the person at this distance. In personal distance (eighteen inches to four feet), there is little chance of physical contact, and you can usually speak in your normal voice. Social distance (four to twelve feet) is the distance at which most members of the dominant culture conduct business. Public distance is usually used in public presentations and can vary from relatively close to very far.

As is the case with most forms of communication, space is associated with culture, and associated more specifically with cultural values. In the dominant culture of the United States, privacy is highly valued. This view often is translated into Americans wanting more space than is normally taken by people in Mexico,[193] for instance. Even the values of individualism and collectivism, which were discussed in detail in Chapter 5, are manifested in how people use space. For example, cultures that stress individualism (England, the United States, Germany, and Australia) generally demand more space than do collective cultures. Their members "tend to take an active, aggressive stance when their space is violated."[194] The Swiss will even "back away" when their counterparts move too close.[195] According to Andersen, in collective cultures, where people are more interdependent, "the members work, play, live and sleep in close proximity to one another."[196] According to Triandis, Arabs, Latin Americans, and U.S. Hispanics would fall into this category.[197] As we pointed out earlier, in Mexico the "physical distance between people when engaged in conversation is closer than what is usual north of the border."[198]

With regard to Arabs, Ruch writes, "Typical Arab conversations are at close range. Closeness cannot be avoided."[199] This closeness is even reflected when people stand in line. As Morrison, Conaway, and Douress point out, when waiting, "Egyptians do not stand in neat lines . . . everyone pushes their way toward the front."[200]

As we have noted elsewhere, a person's use of space is directly linked to the value system of his or her culture. In some Asian cultures, for example, students do not sit close

to their teachers or stand near their bosses; the extended distance demonstrates deference and esteem. Extra interpersonal distance is also part of the cultural experience of the people of Scotland and Sweden, for whom it reflects privacy. In Germany, as Hall and Hall note, personal space is sacred.[201] For the Germans "this distancing is a protective barrier and psychological symbol that operates in a manner similar to that of the home."[202] You find the opposite view toward space in the Brazilian culture, where "closeness and human warmth is apparent," and hence, conversation takes place with less room between participants. [203]

CONSIDER THIS

Have you ever felt uncomfortable when someone you had just met stood too close to you?

Why do think you experienced this discomfort?

SEATING

Seating arrangements can also be a form of nonverbal communication. Notice, for example, that Americans, when in groups, tend to talk with those opposite them rather than those seated or standing beside them. This pattern also controls how they select leaders when in groups: in most instances, the person sitting at the head of the table is chosen (or the leader will move directly to the head table position). In America, leaders usually are accustomed to being removed physically from the rest of the group and consequently choose chairs at the end of the table. In China, seating arrangements take on different meanings and often reflect strong cultural values. For example, because China is a culture that greatly values proper etiquette, ritual and its historical past, sitting arrangements are often dictated by cultural norms, particularly at formal events such as diplomatic and business banquets. The order of seats usually places the honored person (often decided by seniority and age) facing east.[204] In addition, the Chinese often experience alienation and uneasiness when they face someone directly or sit opposite them at a desk or table.[205] If you view a news story about American diplomats meeting with government officials from China, you might observe that the meeting is taking place with people sitting side by side—frequently on couches. In Korea, seating arrangements reflect status and role distinctions. In a car, office, or home, the seat on the right is considered to be the place of honor.

For the Japanese, seating at any formal or semiformal event will be determined based on hierarchy. When conducting business or diplomatic negotiations, the Japanese will arrange themselves with the most senior person sitting in the middle and those next highest in rank sitting to the left and right of this senior position. Low-ranking members will sit away from the table, behind the other representatives.[206] Seating arrangements are also a way of demonstrating social hierarchy in the Fijian culture.[207] The seat near the center house post is the seat of honor. Status in this culture is also reflected in the custom that women sit "below" men in the home and elders sit "above" junior members of the household.

FURNITURE ARRANGEMENT

The way people and cultures arrange furniture (chairs, tables, desks, etc.) also communicates in both obvious and subtle ways. The importance of seating arrangement as a form of communication is seen in the Chinese traditional philosophy of *feng shui*. This

approach to the arrangement of furniture and space is part of the Chinese philosophy that stresses the need for people and nature to live in harmony—a concept discussed in detail earlier in the book. The heart of this perspective, as it applies to space, is that people must live with, rather than against, their environment. In short, for the Chinese, and recently for many Westerners, *feng shui* "is the art of manipulating the physical environment to establish harmony with the natural environment and to achieve happiness, prosperity, and health."[208] You can observe the signs of this philosophy in the way some Chinese arrange themselves at a table. In signing business agreements, a Chinese persons will often want to sit in a seat that they believe allows them to be in consonance with their surroundings.[209]

As is the case with all aspects of nonverbal communication, the arrangement of furniture is a reflection of cultural values. In the United States, furniture arrangement is used for privacy and "can be used to withdraw or avoid interactions."[210] People who value conversation, such as the French, Italians, and Mexicans, are often surprised when they visit the United State and see that the furniture in the living room is pointed toward the television set so people can concentrate on the TV program and not the other people in the room. They believe such an arrangement stifles conversation.

In Japan, offices are usually shared with a great many colleagues, and furniture is, like the people themselves, placed in close proximity. The contrast between office arrangements in the United States and Japan can, of course create problems. As Nishiyama notes, "Because of its lack of privacy, Westerners, especially individualistic Americans, might find the Japanese office arrangement very uncomfortable and annoying."[211]

As we have already noted, the arrangement of furniture in offices can give you a clue to the character of a people. According to Hall and Hall, "French space is a reflection of French culture and French institutions. Everything is centralized, and spatially the entire country is laid out around centers."[212] Hence, offices are organized around the manager, who is at the center. In Germany, where privacy is stressed, office seating is dispersed throughout the office.[213] By comparison, in Japan, where group effort and hierarchy are important, office seating is arranged according to seniority and desks often abut each other.

SOME CO-CULTURAL EXAMPLES

Some co-cultures have their own special use of space. Prostitutes, for example, are very possessive of their territory. When prostitutes mentally mark an area as their own, even though it may be a public street or hotel lobby, they behave as if it were their personal property and attempts to keep other prostitutes away.[214] In prisons, where space is limited, controlled, and at a premium, space and territory are crucial forms of communication. New inmates quickly learn the culture of prison by finding out about the use of space. They soon know when to enter another cell, what part of the exercise yard they can visit, that reduction of space is a form of punishment, and that they must form lines for nearly all activities.

Women also use space differently than do men. For example, women normally "establish closer proximity to others" than do men.[215] In summarizing other gender differences in the use of space, Leathers has concluded:

> Men use space as a means of asserting their dominance over women, as in the following: (a) they claim more personal space than women; (b) they more actively defend violations of their territories—which are usually much larger than the territories of women;

> (c) under conditions of high density, they become more aggressive in their attempts to regain a desired measure of privacy; and (d) men more frequently walk in front of their female partner than vice versa.[216]

Spatial distance is also a variable when interacting with members of the deaf culture. For example, when using American Sign Language, it is necessary for the person signing to be seen. It would not be uncommon for two signers to sit across from one another at a distance that hearing people might perceive as impersonal.[217]

TRY THIS

The next time you are at an airport, supermarket, or shopping mall where people from different cultural backgrounds might be interacting, try to observe the interactions by referencing the items listed below:

a. What are the average distances between the people you observed? Were there differences related to culture?

b. What differences did you observe in touching behavior? How did people greet each other? Did people hug, kiss, shake hands, etc.?

c. What differences did you observe in facial expressions? Were people animated, reserved, etc.?

d. Did you notice any differences in gestures? Did some people use more or fewer gestures?

Time

Over three centuries ago, when the Dutch mathematician Christian Huygens built the first pendulum clock, which allowed people to keep track of hours and minutes, little did he know that his invention would have such an impact on people's lives. Most people realize that time is, in many ways, a fabrication of the mind—yet we strap clocks to our wrists, hang them on our walls, see them on our computer screens, and give them the power to control everything from moods to relationships. Anthropologists Rapport and Overing underscore the importance of time to human behavior when they write, "To cut up life into moments of being, in sum, is for the individual to possess a means by which that life can be filled, shaped and reshaped in significant ways."[218] Self-reflection will reveal what time communicates about your professional and private life. If you arrive thirty minutes late for an important appointment and offer no apology, you send a certain message about yourself. Telling someone how guilty you feel about your belated arrival also sends a message. Studies even point out that one of the gauges of a successful and intimate relationship is the amount of time people spend together.[219]

Of course, there is much more to time than what it says about your relationships. Gonzales and Zimbardo accentuate the multidimensional aspect of time when they write, "Our temporal perspective influences a wide range of psychological processes, from motivation, emotion and spontaneity to risk-taking, creativity and problem-solving."[220]

The connection of time to culture is profound, and like most aspects of culture, is part of the enculturation process early in life. Hickson, Stacks, and Moore highlight this link as follows:

> Culture begins to educate each of us at an early age as to the value of and the means by which we distinguish time. Each culture has its own particular time norms, which are unconsciously followed until violated. When such violations occur, however, they are

perceived as intentional messages associated with that particular culture. In this regard, each culture teaches its people what is appropriate or inappropriate with regard to time.[221]

Your own experience tells you that in North America, most members of the dominant culture adhere to Benjamin Franklin's advice that "Time is money." Think of what is being said about the use of time in the common expressions "Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today," "He who hesitates is lost," and "Just give me the bottom line." An excellent summary of the perception of time held by many North Americans is offered by Crouch:

> In the United States, where time is fixed and measurable, and where we feel seconds ticking away, we attach much significance to schedules. We measure our efficiency according to our ability to meet deadlines and cross off items on our checklist by the end of the day. Getting things done on schedule has a value in itself.[222]

Gannon further highlights the bond between time and culture in the United States when he writes:

> Time is also limited in America because there are so many things to do in one's lifetime. The society develops technologically at horrendous speed, and it's difficult to keep up. One has to be continuously on the move. This is America: there is little time for contemplating or meditating.[223]

As is the case with all aspects of nonverbal communication, culture plays a substantial role in how you perceive and manipulate time in order to communicate different messages. Ballard and Seibold establish the connection between culture and time when they note, "The existence and proliferation of objective, independent time-measuring devices is itself a cultural by-product, and the uniform seconds, minutes, and hours that clocks appear to 'measure' also are culturally constructed."[224]

As you would suspect when cultures employ time in dissimilar ways, problems can occur. As Novinger states, "When people of two different cultures 'use' time differently, their interaction can generate misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and ill will."[225] A culture's conception of time can be examined from three different perspectives: (1) *informal time*; (2) *perceptions of past, present, and future*; and (3) *Hall's monochronic and polychronic classifications*.

INFORMAL TIME

Punctuality. In most instances, rules for informal time, such as punctuality and pace, are seldom explicitly taught. Like most of culture, these rules usually function below the level of consciousness. Argyle makes much the same point when he compares cultural differences in punctuality standards:

> How late is "late"? This varies greatly. In Britain and America, one may be five minutes late for a business appointment, but not fifteen and certainly not thirty minutes late, which is perfectly normal in Arab countries. On the other hand, in Britain it is correct to be five to fifteen minutes late for an invitation to dinner. An Italian might arrive two hours late, an Ethiopian after, and Japanese not at all—he had accepted only to prevent his host from losing face.[226]

Status relationships as well as preventing someone from losing face can influence the use of time in Japan. As Nishiyama points out, "The time usage in Japan is usually determined by the status relationships between the people involved."[227] What Nishiyama is saying, of course, is that someone in Japan would wait much longer for a person of higher status to arrive than he or she would if the person was of lower status.

As the above example demonstrates, reaction to punctuality is rooted in our cultural experiences. In the United States, the boss can arrive late for a meeting without anyone raising an eyebrow; if the secretary is late, he or she may receive a reprimand in the form of a stern glance. A rock star or a physician can keep people waiting for a long time, but the warm-up band and the food caterer had better be on time. In Latin America, one is expected to arrive late to appointments as a sign of respect. In fact, in Chile it is considered rude to be on time to social events.[228] This same notion of time is seen in Spain, where, according to Lewis, there is the belief that "punctuality messes up schedules."[229] In Africa, people often "show up late for appointments, meetings, and social engagements."[230] There is a Nigerian expression that says, "A watch did not invent man." These two views of tardiness would be perceived as rudeness in Germany where, according to Hall and Hall, "Promptness is taken for granted in Germany—in fact, it's almost an obsession."[231]

Pace. You can determine a culture's attitude toward time by examining the pace at which members of that culture perform specific acts. Americans, because of the pace of life in the United States, always appear to be in a hurry. As Kim observes, "Life is in constant motion. People consider time to be wasted or lost unless they are doing something."[232] From fast-food restaurants, to one-stop gas stations, to microwave cooking, to computers that use fast processors, Americans live life at a very hectic pace. Even the expression "rush hour" describes how commuters in major cities are hurrying and dashing to get from point A to point B. Most other cultures would not even have a literal translation for the two words "rush hour." Children in the United States grow up hearing others tell them not "to waste so much time" and advising them that "actions speak louder than words." Think how those expressions differ from the Latin proverb, "Haste manages all things badly," or the Mexican saying, "You don't have to get there first, you just have to know how to get there."[233]

As you can see, many cultures view time differently and hence live life at a pace different from that of most people in the United States. Asselin and Mastron point out that "the French do not share the American sense of urgency to accomplish tasks."[234] The Japanese culture also treats time in ways that often appear at cross-purposes with American goals. Drawing on the Japanese culture for his example, Brislin illustrates how pace is reflected in the negotiation process:

> When negotiating with the Japanese, Americans like to get right down to business. They were socialized to believe that "time is money." They can accept about fifteen minutes of "small talk" about the weather, their trip, and baseball, but more than that becomes unreasonable. The Japanese, on the other hand, want to get to know their business counterparts. They feel that the best way to do this is to have long conversations with Americans about a wide variety of topics.[235]

Indonesians are yet another group that does not hurry. They perceive time as a limitless pool. According to Harris and Moran, there is even "a phrase in Indonesia describing this concept that translates as 'rubber time,' so that time stretches

or shrinks and is therefore very flexible."[236] For the Chinese, who also value a slow pace, "the important thing is to complete the task, no matter how long it takes."[237] In Africa, where a slow pace is the rule, "People who rush are suspected of trying to cheat."[238]

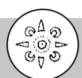
As you have already read, nonverbal behavior is often directly linked to a culture's religious and value orientation. This notion is made manifest when you turn to the Arab culture. As we discussed in Chapter 3 when we looked at Islam, most Muslims believe that their destiny is a matter of fate. The Arab connection to the pace of life and time is clearly pointed out by Abu-Gharbieh: "Throughout the Arab world, there is nonchalance about time and deadlines: the pace of life is more leisurely than in the West. Social events and appointments tend not to have a fixed beginning or end."[239]

Manifestations of pace assume a host of forms. One study, for example, pointed out that even the speed at which people walk reflects a culture's concept of time. People from England and the United States move faster than people from Taiwan and Indonesia.[240]

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

How a culture perceives and uses the concepts of past, present, and future was discussed in Chapter 5 when we looked at cultural values as they applied to the perception of time. Let us review some of those findings so that you can see how time is tied not only to cultural values but also to nonverbal communication.

Past. As the word *past* tells you, cultures with this orientation attach importance to the past, and use what went before as a gauge for their current perception of people and events. Richmond, McCracken, and Paye offer a summary of the link between valuing the past and comprehending the present: "Cultures that have a past-oriented philosophy tend to apply past events to similar new situations. These societies have respect for the elderly and listen to what their senior citizens have to say regarding the past."[241] They also have a strong sense of history and established social institutions. Knowing that a culture is past oriented can give you insight into how members of that culture view the world and other people. For example, the British place much emphasis on tradition and are often perceived as resisting change. A statement often heard in England, whether people are talking about daily life or being asked about the monarchy, is "We have always done it this way." The cultures of China, Japan, and India, with their long histories and strong sense of pride in their cultures' persistence for thousands of years, also use the past as a guide to how to live in the present. Reflect on the Chinese maxim that advises, "Consider the past and you will know the present," or the saying from India, "Learn about the future by looking at the past." The Irish and Irish Americans also take great pride in their past. As Wilson notes, "Irish Americans, with their strong sense of tradition, are typically past-oriented. They have an allegiance to the past, their ancestors, and their history. The past is often the focus of Irish stories."[242]



REMEMBER THIS

Cultures have very different attitudes and perceptions toward the past, present, and future.

American Indians also use the past to help explain and understand life. Still and Hodgins explain this approach in the following manner:

> Most American Indian tribes are not future oriented. Very little planning is done for the future because their view is that many things are outside of the individual's control and may affect or change the future. In fact, the Navajo language does not include a future tense verb. Time is not viewed as a constant or something that one can control, but rather as something that is always with the individual. Thus, to plan for the future is something viewed as foolish.[243]

CONSIDER THIS

Differences in time orientation, like all aspects of nonverbal communication, can create communication differences. At a business meeting involving individuals from the three orientations discussed above, you might hear something like the following conversation:

Past orientation: *Why don't we look at how much success we had with a similar merger with an Indian company five years ago?*

Present orientation: *Just wait a second. It really doesn't matter what we did five years ago. The key is what we want to do now.*

Future orientation: *Worrying only about what happened in the past or is going on now is shortsighted. For this company to make money, we need to think about what this merger will mean in the future.*

Present. In this orientation, the past is not nearly as important as the *present*. Present-oriented people see the future as ambiguous, capricious, and, in a sense, beyond the control of the individual. Because the past is over and the future is unpredictable, present cultures, such as Filipinos and Latin Americans, enjoy living in the moment. These cultures tend to be more impulsive and spontaneous than others and often have a casual, relaxed lifestyle. Mexican Americans also have a culture that "tends to focus on the present and a more flexible attitude toward time."[244] What is important is what one is doing now. So strong is the cultural desire to disregard time that Crouch advises, half jokingly, that you should "take off your watch" when doing business in Mexico.[245]

Future. In *future*-oriented cultures, what is yet to come is most valued. Change, taking chances, a stress on youth, and optimism are all hallmarks of cultures that hold this orientation. This view toward the future is held by most Americans. As a people, Americans are constantly thinking about what is coming. Very young children even play with the toys (dolls, cars, guns, and so on) that rush them to, and prepare them for, adulthood. As we noted during our discussion of pace, having an eye to the future often produces a very low tolerance for extensions and postponements. What you want, you want now, so you can dispose of this moment and move on to the next. In the classroom, U.S. students longingly watch the clock as it counts the minutes to the end of class—and cues them to move on to another class. In addition, as Adler notes, future-oriented cultures welcome innovation and "have less regard for past social, cultural or organizational customs and traditions."[246]

MONOCHRONIC (M-TIME) AND POLYCHRONIC (P-TIME)

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall advanced another classification of time as a form of communication. Hall proposed that cultures organize time in one of two ways: either

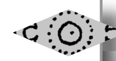
monochronic (M-time) or polychronic (P-time).[247] Hall's classifications represent two distinct approaches to perceiving and utilizing time.

M-time. As the word *monochronic* implies, this concept explains time as linear and segmented. More specifically, "A monochronic view of time believes time is a scarce resource which must be rationed and controlled through the use of schedules and appointments, and through aiming to do only one thing at any one time."[248] Novinger sums up the characteristics of monochronic cultures by noting, "Cultures that are monochronic have a predominantly linear and sequential approach to time that is rational, suppresses spontaneity and tends to focus on one activity at a time."[249] Cultures with this orientation perceive time as being *tangible*. When speaking of the M-time experience Hall states, "People talk about time as though it were money, as something that can be 'spent,' 'saved,' 'wasted,' and 'lost.'"[250] To act out this orientation would mean to value punctuality, good organization, and the judicious use of time. The English naturalist Charles Darwin abstracted this view of time when he wrote, "A man who dares to waste one hour of time has not discovered the value of life." The time clock records the hours you work, the school bell moves you from class to class, and the calendar marks important days and events in your life.

Cultures that can be classified as M-time include Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and the dominant U.S. culture. As Hall explains, "People of the Western world, particularly Americans, tend to think of time as something fixed in nature, something around us and from which we cannot escape; an ever-present part of the environment, just like the air we breathe."[251] In the business setting, M-time cultures schedule appointments in advance, do not run late, and have "a strong preference for following initial plans."[252] In addition, when doing business, M-time people "tend to emphasize getting contracts signed and them moving on to some new endeavor."[253]

P-time. People from cultures on *polychronic* time live their lives quite differently than do those who move to the monochronic clock. The pace for P-time cultures (Arab, African, Indian, Latin American, South Asian, and Southeast Asian) is more leisurely then the one found in M-time cultures. One reason for this is that people and human relationships, not tasks, are at the center of polychronic cultures. As Smith and Bond point out, "A polychronic view of time sees the maintenance of harmonious relationships as the important agenda, so that use of time needs to be flexible in order that we do right by the various people to whom we have obligations."[254] These cultures are normally collective and deal with life in a holistic manner. For P-time cultures, time is less tangible; hence, feelings of wasted time are not as prevalent as in M-time cultures. Their members can interact with more than one person or do more than one thing at a time. Gannon offers an example of the multidimensional nature of P-time when he talks of the Turkish culture. "'Polychronism' best describes the Turkish ability to concentrate on different things simultaneously at work, at home, or in the coffee house."[255] Because P-time has this notion of multiple activities and flexibility, Dresser believes it "explains why there is more interrupting in conversations carried on by people from Arabic, Asian, and Latin American cultures."[256] African cultures also take great stock in the activity that is occurring at the moment, and emphasize people more than schedules. As Richmond and Gestrin note, "Time for Africans is defined by events rather than the clock or calendar."[257] "For Africans, the person they are with is more important than the one who is out of sight."[258] This leads, of course, to a lifestyle that to outsiders appears to be spontaneous and unstructured.

Within the United States, there are co-cultures that use time differently from the dominant culture. Mexican Americans frequently speak of "Latino time" when their timing varies from that of the dominant culture. Burgoon and Saine have observed that the Polynesian culture of Hawaii has "Hawaiian time,"[259] a concept of time that is very relaxed and reflects the informal lifestyle of the native Hawaiian people. And among Samoans, there is a time perspective referred to as "coconut time," which is derived from the notion that it is not necessary to pick coconuts because they will fall when the time is right. African Americans often use what is referred to as "BPT" (Black People's Time) or "hang-loose time."[260] This concept, which has its roots in the P-time cultures of Africa, maintains that priority belongs to what is happening at that instant. Statements such as "Hey, man, what's happenin'?" reflect the importance of the here and now.

IMAGINE THIS 

David Thorn was sent to Mexico by his employer, a computer chip company, to try to negotiate a large contract that would allow his company to start producing chips in Mexico. The contract would mean a savings of millions of dollars for the company. His Mexican contact person, Santiago Guzman, invited David to a dinner party that he and his wife were hosting. Santiago told David the party would start "around eight on Friday night." David arrived a few minutes before eight so he could make a good impression. When he arrived, Santiago and his wife were still dressing and had not even begun to prepare to receive guests.

What went wrong?

Two points should be made before we conclude our discussion of M-time and P-time. First, while we have talked about M-time and P-time as being two very separate and distinct categories, we would suggest that it is much more realistic to perceive Hall's two classifications as points on a continuum. There are many cultures that do not fall precisely into one of the two categories contained in Hall's analysis, but instead contain degrees of both M-time and P-time. For instance, we agree with Gesteland when he lists Austria, New Zealand, Russia, most of East-Central and Southern Europe, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, and South Korea as cultures that contain some traits associated with both M-time cultures and P-time cultures.[261] Second, it is important to remember that how a person "acts out" M-time or P-time characteristics is contextual. In one setting, you might be extremely prompt (M-time); in another situation, you might decide that what you are doing now is important and postpone your next appointment (P-time). Hall offers an excellent example from Japan on how the setting can determine which orientation a person utilizes:

> The Japanese time system combines both M-time and P-time. In their dealings with foreigners and their use of technology, they are monochronic; in every other way, especially in interpersonal relations, they are polychronic.[262]

In Table 7.1, Hall and Hall summarize the basic aspects of monochronic and polychronic time. Their condensation takes many of the ideas we have mentioned and translates them into specific behaviors.

TABLE 7.1 Comparison of Monochronic and Polychronic Cultures

MONOCHRONIC TIME PEOPLE	POLYCHRONIC TIME PEOPLE
Do one thing at a time	Do many things at once
Concentrate on the job	Are easily distracted and subject to interruption
Take time commitments (deadlines, schedules) seriously	Consider time commitments an objective to be achieved, if possible
Are low context and need information	Are high context and already have information
Are committed to the job	Are committed to people and human relationships
Adhere to plans	Change plans often and easily
Are concerned about not disturbing others; follow rules of privacy	Are more concerned with people close to them (family, friends, close business associates) than with privacy
Show great respect for private property; seldom borrow or lend	Borrow and lend things often and easily
Emphasize promptness	Base promptness on the relationship
Are accustomed to short-term relationships	Have short tendency to rebuild lifetime relationships

Source: Adapted from Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall, *Understanding Cultural Differences: Germans, French, and Americans* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1990), 15.

Silence

An African proverb states, "Silence is also speech." We contend that silence can send nonverbal cues concerning the communication situations in which you participate. Observe the poignant use of silence when the classical composer strategically places intervals of orchestration so that the ensuing silence marks a contrast in expression. Silence can be a powerful message. There is a story of how the American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson "talked" in silence for hours to the famous English writer Thomas Carlyle. It seems that Emerson, on a visit to Europe, arranged to meet with Carlyle, who was his idol. Emerson maintains they sat together for hours in perfect silence until it was time for him to go, then parted company cordially, congratulating each other on the fruitful time they had had together.

Periods of silence affect interpersonal communication by providing an interval in an ongoing interaction during which the participants have time to think, check or suppress an emotion, encode a lengthy response, or inaugurate another line of thought. Silence also helps provide feedback, informing both sender and receiver about the clarity of an idea or its significance in the overall interpersonal exchange. In most Western cultures, talk is highly valued, and it is often difficult to determine the meaning behind someone's silence, because it can be interpreted as an indication of agreement, anger, lack of interest, injured feelings, or contempt. Calero notes that for many Americans "silence can be a very frightening experience. There are often occasions when it is embarrassing, humiliating or makes us appear to be fools when we remain silent."[263] This is one reason why Americans will usually try to fill up the silence with "small talk."

SOME CULTURAL EXAMPLES

The intercultural implications of silence as a means of interpreting ongoing verbal interactions are as diverse as those of other nonverbal cues, as Crystal helps to illustrate:

> Cross-cultural differences are common over when to talk and when to remain silent, or what a particular instance of silence means. In response to the question, "Will you marry me?" silence in English would be interpreted as uncertainty . . . In Igbo, it would be considered a denial if the woman were to continue to stand there and an acceptance if she ran away.[264]

Knowing how various cultures use silence is essential information for anyone who interacts with a culture different from his or her own. As Braithwaite points out:

> One of the basic building blocks of competence, both linguistic and cultural, is knowing when not to speak in a particular community. Therefore, to understand where and when to be silent, and the meaning attached to silence, is to gain a keen insight into the fundamental structure of communication in that world.[265]

As we have already noted, silence is not a meaningful part of the life of most members of the dominant culture in the United States. Talking at coffee houses, talking on cell phones, watching television, listening to music with an iPod, and other sound-producing activities keep Americans away from silence. Reflect for a moment on the popularity of radio and television programs called "talk shows." Numerous studies have pointed out that most Americans believe that talking is an important activity and actually enjoy talking.[266] Beamer and Varner point out that Americans "often feel responsible for starting a conversation or keeping it going, even with strangers."[267] Other cultures also have a similar positive view of talking over silence. Within the business context, Lewis notes that "a silent reaction to a business proposal would seem negative to American, German, French, Southern European and Arab executives."[268] It seems that there is a link between cultures that emphasize social interaction (Jewish, Italian, French, Arab, etc.) and their perception of and use of silence. In fact, talking in these cultures is highly valued. In the Greek culture, there is also a belief that being in the company of other people and engaging in conversation are signs of a good life. The concepts of solitude and silence are overshadowed in Greek history and literature, which contain numerous references with allusions to rhetoric and dialogues. The culture that produced Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates is not one that will find silent meditation very appealing. This is in sharp contrast to cultures in which a hushed and still environment is the rule. We now will look at a few cultural variations in the use of silence, so that you might better understand how a lack of words can influence the outcome of any communication event.

In the Eastern tradition, the view of silence is much different from the Western view. Easterners do not feel uncomfortable with the absence of noise or talk. There is a belief in many Eastern traditions that words can contaminate an experience and that inner peace and wisdom come only through silence. Barnlund says of Buddhism, "One of its tenets is that words are deceptive and silent intuition is a truer way to confront the world; mind-to-mind communication through words is less reliable than heart-to-heart communication through an intuitive grasp of things."[269] Silence is also used by many Asian people as a means of avoiding conflict. Chan explains this idea when he writes, "A typical practice among many

Asian peoples is to refuse to speak any further in conversation if they cannot personally accept the speaker's attitude, opinion, or way of thinking about particular issues or subjects."[270]

Silence is both important and complex in the Japanese culture. In many instances, people are expected to know what another person is thinking and feeling without anything having to be said. Some scholars even refer to this mode of communication as "implying rather than saying."[271] Because of the emphasis placed on silence in the Japanese culture, it can serve a variety of purposes. First, among family members, silence is actually seen as a way of "talking." In the following example, Kerr offers an explanation of how silence takes the place of words for the Japanese: "When people say "There's no communication between parents and children," this is an American way of thinking. In Japan we didn't need spoken communication between parents and children. A glance at the face, a glance back, and we understand enough."[272]

Second, silence in Japan is often linked to credibility. That is, someone who is silent is often perceived as having higher credibility than someone who talks a lot. Jaworski makes this point when he notes, "Reticent individuals are trusted as honest, sincere, and straightforward. Thus silence is an active state, while speech is an excuse for delaying activity."[273] Finally, the Japanese also use silence to avoid both conflict and embarrassment.[274] The Japanese view of silence is reflected in the following proverbs: "It is the duck that squawks that gets shot," "Numerous words show scanty wares," "A flower does not speak," and "The mouth is to eat with, not to speak with." Compare these perceptions of silence with the American saying, "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." Or with the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson when he notes, "Speech is power: Speech is to persuade, to convert, to compel." You can easily imagine how the use of silence might create communication problems when people representing these two divergent styles come together. For example, Adler says that during business negotiations between Japanese and Americans, each will give a different interpretation to the same silent period. The Japanese use the silence to "consider the Americans' offer; the Americans interpret the silence as rejection and respond by making concessions."[275]

Silence plays a dominant role in the Indian culture. The Hindu believes that "self realization, salvation, truth, wisdom, peace, and bliss are all achieved in a state of meditation and introspection when the individual is communicating with himself or herself in silence."[276] As you would suspect, to accomplish these states you have to remain silent. Many Scandinavian cultures, like Asian cultures, also have a view of silence that differs from the one found in the dominant culture in the United States. For example, in Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, silence conveys interest and consideration. In fact, your silence tells the other person that you want them to continue talking.[277]

Some U.S. co-cultures also differ from the dominant U.S. culture in the use of silence. Many American Indians place a premium on silence. As Hoeveler points out, "Silence is a major value in Native American culture, for silence is the token of acceptance, the symbol of peace and serenity, and the outward expression of harmony between the human and natural worlds."[278] Native Americans also believe that silence, not speaking, is a sign of a remarkable person. It is a gesture of respect to persons of authority, age, and wisdom. The famous Nez Perce leader Chief Joseph is quoted as saying, "It does not require many words to speak the truth." Johannesen, in discussing the meaning of silence among American Indians, noted that for this co-culture "one derives from silence the cornerstone of character, the virtues of self-control, courage, patience

and dignity."[279] Among Navajos, someone who does not use silence and responds too quickly when asked a question is considered immature. In social settings, silence is the rule when a Native American is meeting a stranger, during periods of mourning, when dealing with someone who is exceptionally angry, or when greeting someone who has been gone for a long period of time.[280]

Two points should be obvious from our discussion of silence. First, you must be careful not to assume that people are communicating only when they talk. Second, because of cultural variations in this form of communication, it behooves you to know cultural attitudes toward talk, noise, and silence. This knowledge can save you from both anxiety and ethnocentrism in intercultural communication encounters.

SUMMARY

- Nonverbal communication is important to the study of intercultural communication because people make judgments about others based on their nonverbal behavior, use nonverbal messages to create impressions, and use nonverbals to manage interaction.
- Nonverbal communication is culture-bound.
- Nonverbal communication involves all nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that (1) are generated by both the source and his or her use of the environment and (2) have potential message value for the source or receiver.
- Nonverbal messages may be intentional or unintentional.
- Nonverbal communication has five basic functions: to repeat, to complement, to substitute for a verbal action, to regulate, and to contradict a communication event.
- Nonverbal actions seldom occur in isolation.
- Nonverbal communication and culture are similar in that both are learned, both are passed on from generation to generation, and both involve shared understandings.
- Studying nonverbal behavior can lead to the discovery of a culture's underlying attitudes and values.
- Studying nonverbal behavior can assist us in isolating our own ethnocentrism.
- The body is a major source of nonverbal messages. These messages are communicated by means of general appearance, skin color, attire, body movements (kinesics), posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, touch, and paralanguage.
- Cultures differ in their perception and use of personal space, seating, and furniture arrangement.
- We can understand a culture's sense of time by learning about how members of that culture view informal time and the past, present, and future, and whether or not their orientation toward time is monochronic or polychronic.
- The use of silence varies from culture to culture.

ACTIVITIES

1. Locate pictures from magazines and newspapers that you believe are showing the following facial expressions: (a) anger, (b) joy, (c) sadness, (d) fear, and (e) revulsion. Show these pictures to people from various cultures and see what interpretations they give to the facial expressions.
2. Ask someone from a culture different from your own to demonstrate examples of his or her culture's use of communicative body movements (kinesics). What similarities are there between your movements and your informant's? What differences are there? What are the areas of potential misunderstanding?
3. In small groups, produce an inventory of common American gestures. An example of one is the "OK" gesture: the thumb and forefinger of one hand form an "O," and the rest of the fingers on that hand arch above the "O." What other gestures can you think of? Compare your findings with those of the rest of the class and make a master list.
4. Watch a foreign film and look for examples of differences in proxemics, touch, and facial expressions. Compare these differences to the dominant culture of North America.
5. In a small group, discuss the following sentence: "Our nonverbal actions usually are a reflection of our culture."
6. Discuss in a small group why you believe there are touch taboos in your culture. Groups will be most productive if they are composed of people from a variety of cultures.

DISCUSSION IDEAS

1. Why is it useful to understand the nonverbal language of a culture?
2. In what situations might you need to interpret the nonverbal behavior of someone from another culture? What problems could arise from not understanding differences in nonverbal behavior?
3. Give your culture's interpretation of the following nonverbal actions:
   - Two people are speaking loudly, waving their arms, and using many gestures.
   - A customer in a restaurant waves his hand over his head and snaps his fingers loudly.
   - An elderly woman dresses entirely in black.
   - A young man dresses entirely in black.
   - An adult pats a child's head.
   - Two men kiss in public.
4. How can studying the intercultural aspects of nonverbal behavior assist you in discovering your own ethnocentrism? Give personal examples.
5. How late can you be for the following? (a) a class, (b) work, (c) a job interview, (d) a dinner party, (e) a date with a friend? Ask this same question to members of 2 or 3 cultures other than your own.
6. What is meant by "Nonverbal communication is rule-governed"?
7. In a small group, discuss the following topic: Are there more cross-cultural nonverbal behaviors that are alike or more that are different?

CHAPTER 8

Cultural Influences on Context: The Business Setting

Live together like brothers and do busines like strangers.

ARAB PROVERB

You will never know a man till you do business with him.

SCOTTISH PROVERB

Culture and Context

There is a well-known saying that everyone has to be somewhere. And while that expression might seem obvious and even inconsequential, it is not only true but also central to the study of human communication. The next three chapters are about some of the places where people, especially in the intercultural setting, find themselves.

We begin with the following truism: communication does not take place in a void. All human interaction is influenced to some degree by the cultural, social, and physical settings in which it occurs. These settings are called the *communication context*. What we are proposing is that your culture specifies the appropriate communicative behavior within a variety of social and physical contexts by prescribing certain rules. When communicating with members of your own culture, you and your cohorts rely on internalized cultural rules that stipulate the appropriate behaviors for the specific communication situation. These rules enable you to communicate effectively with each other, and since they are a product of your enculturation, you do not have to think consciously about which rules to use. But when engaging in intercultural communication, things can be different, because you and your communication partners may be operating under very dissimilar sets of rules. To be a competent intercultural communicator, you must be aware of how diverse cultural rules influence the communication context. Otherwise, you may encounter a variety of surprises—some of which could be embarrassing, detrimental, or both!

CONSIDER THIS

Think for a moment how differently you communicate in the following settings: (a) a doctor's office, (b) a courtroom (c) a classroom, and (d) religious building. Why do you believe your actions are different in each of these locations?

In order to help you understand just how important context is in intercultural communication, we will review three basic assumptions about human communication that directly apply to the setting: (1) communication is rule governed, (2) context prescribes appropriate communication rules, and (3) communication rules are culturally diverse.

Communication Is Rule Governed

Both consciously and unconsciously, people expect that their interactions will follow appropriate and culturally determined rules—rules that tell both parties what is suitable behavior for the specific situation. Rules can be thought of as guidelines for your actions and the actions of others. These rules, as Wood points out, "help define acceptable and unacceptable codes of thought, feeling, and behavior."[1] Communication rules govern both verbal and nonverbal behaviors and specify not only what should be said, but also how it should be said. Nonverbal rules, as we saw in Chapter 7, apply to touch (who is greeted with a hug and who gets a handshake?), facial expressions (where and when to reveal a smile), eye contact (the appropriateness and inappropriateness of staring), and paralanguage (when to whisper and when to shout). Verbal rules govern such things as topic selection (religion and politics versus the weather) turn taking (talking over someone or waiting your turn), voice volume (shouting or whispering), and the formality of language ("Hello, Mr. and Mrs. Smith" versus "Hey you").

There are also rules that people follow in their personal relationships. Morreale, Spitzberg, and Barge point out that there is a long set of rules that govern friendships (emotionally trusting the other person versus keeping secrets) and conflict (raising your voice versus not showing any emotion).[2] What is interesting about a culture's set of rules is that they, like most of culture, are learned and adhered to.

Context Helps Specify Communication Rules

Our second assumption about communication is that the context specifies the appropriateness of the rules to be employed. As Shimanoff states in her seminal work on the topic, rules are "a followable prescription that indicates what behavior is obligated, preferred, or prohibited in a certain context."[3] From personal experiences, you can observe the validity of Shimanoff's rule theory. Think for a moment how such diverse contexts as a classroom, bank, church, hospital, courtroom, wedding, funeral, or a day at the beach determines which communication rules you follow. In a job interview, you might use formal or respectful words such as "sir" or "ma'am" when responding to your potential employer. Yet at a football or basketball game, your language would be far less formal, incorporating slang phrases and quite possibly good-natured derogatory remarks about the opposing team. For that job interview, you might wear what in the United States Americans call a "power suit" (i.e., a dark suit with white or blue shirt

Gloria Thomas

The setting where business is conducted and the rules that are applied to the transaction are influenced by culture

and conservative tie for men or a dark suit, possibly pin-striped, with a white or pastel blouse for women). For a sports event, jeans or shorts and a T-shirt could be appropriate. Your nonverbal behavior would also be different. At the interview, you would probably shake hands with your prospective employer, but at the football game with friends, you might embrace them when you see them, slap them on the back, or hit a "high-five" (a hand gesture) as a form of greeting.

Communication Rules are Culturally Diverse

A third assumption is that rules can be imposed by special groups (a fraternity handshake or secret password), community (gang argot and "signs"), or culture. Because this is a book about culture, we shall place our emphasis in that area. We begin by pointing out that although cultures have many of the same social settings (schools, business meetings, hospitals, and the like), their members frequently abide by different rules when interacting within those environments. Consequently, concepts of dress, time, language, manners, and nonverbal behavior can differ significantly among cultures. As we noted, when doing business in America, it not uncommon for men and women to welcome each other to a meeting by shaking hands. However, in the Middle East, some deeply religious Muslim businessmen may choose to avoid shaking hands with a woman. This should not be perceived as rude or insulting, but as an indication of the man's religious devotion.[4] Even the topics of conversation at an intercultural business meeting are influenced by cultural rules. American business executives are usually anxious to "get down to business" and often perceive small talk as a waste of time. They are, as Ferraro points out, anxious to get the "contracts signed and then move on to some new endeavor."[5] Doing business in Argentina, you would witness a different set

of contextual rules regarding "small talk" and the pace of the meeting. In Argentina, "Meetings begin and end with polite small talk. You may insult your Argentine counterparts if you rush off without chatting at the end of a meeting."[6] You can even observe slight contextual differences when you compare business entertainment in Turkey and the United States. In Turkey, for example, your Turkish colleagues will insist on paying for all the entertainment. Turkish hospitality is legendary, and they will not permit you to pay for any part of the meal.[7] In the United States, where the rules for business entertaining are very different, the cost of the meal or entertainment is often shared.

Although our three rather obvious examples about cultural rules were drawn from the business environment, the same notion of cultural variations can be found in nearly every context. In this chapter, we examine how culture influences communication in the business setting. In the next chapter, we will consider the educational setting, and in Chapter 10, we will explore the health care setting. We have selected these three settings because they represent three common contexts in which you are likely to encounter people from cultures different from your own. To be successful in those settings, it is essential to be aware of your own culture's rules and how they might differ from the rules of the person with whom you are interacting.

Assessing the Context

Before moving to a detailed analysis of the business, health care, and education settings, we need to pause and examine three communication variables that weave in and out of every communication setting. Regardless of the context or culture, you will find communication rules regarding (1) formality and informality, (2) assertiveness and interpersonal harmony, and (3) status relationships that play a major role in how people respond to their interpersonal and organizational environments.

Formality and Informality

Cultures can have views regarding events and people that range from extremely informal to very formal. The manifestations of informality and formality take many forms.

INFORMALITY

Grounded in a strong belief in individualism and equality, the United States has long been considered an informal culture. As Javidi and Javidi have pointed out, "In North America people tend to treat others with informality and directness. They avoid the use of formal codes of conduct, titles, honorifics, and ritualistic manners in their interactions with others."[8]

In the United States, informality is manifested in a host of ways. For example, regardless of their social position, most Americans will quickly move to using first names when meeting strangers. Even the simple greeting "Hi" can be seen as a reflection of American informality. Althen offers the following summary of how informality is commonly reflected in the United States culture:

> Idiomatic speech and slang are liberally used on most occasions, with formal speech reserved for public events and fairly formal situations. People from almost any station in life can be seen in public wearing jeans, sandals, or other informal attire. People slouch down in chairs or lean on walls or furniture when they talk, rather than maintaining an erect bearing.[9]

The informality and openness displayed by U.S. Americans can be a source of confusion and misunderstanding for people from more formal cultures. Crouch, making the same point about North American business executives doing business in Mexico, notes, "Our disregard for formality sometimes makes international business more difficult."[10] Steward and Bennett offer some examples to buttress Crouch's observation regarding Americans' attitude toward formality:

> The degree of informality found in American communication patterns is uncommon in other cultures. In most Latin American and European societies, for instance, there are levels of formality attached to status difference. In Asian cultures, formal communication may be demanded by greater age as well as by higher status. In Japan, formality is also extended to strangers with whom a relationship is demanded. This formality is no joking matter, since failure to follow appropriate form may suggest to others a severe flaw in character.[11]

FORMALITY

In contrast to the high degree of informality found in the United States, there are many examples of cultures that place a high value on formality. In Egypt, Turkey, and Japan, for instance, the student/teacher relationship is very formal. This may be seen in the Egyptian proverb "Whoever teaches me a letter I should become a slave to him forever." In these countries, when the teacher enters the room, students are expected to stand. When students meet their teachers on the street, they are expected to bow to them. Contrast this with the relaxed, informal student–teacher relationships found in the United States.

Formality is also evident in how cultures use forms of address. Not knowing these differences can cause problems. Germans, for example, address others and conduct themselves in a very formal manner, which many U.S. Americans would consider extreme. Hall and Hall note, "American informality and the habit of calling others by their first names make Germans acutely uncomfortable, particularly when young people or people lower in the hierarchy address their elders or their superiors by their first names."[12] Germany is not the only place where forms of address are directly linked to perception and values. Morrison, Conaway, and Borden report that titles play an important role in India, where first names are usually reserved for close friends.[13] Schneider and Silverman remind us that Mexicans are yet another culture that values formality:

> Mexicans also make heavy use of honorific titles to show respect. New acquaintances met at a party are addressed as *señor*, *señora*, and *señorita*. In business, people address managers with titles like director, doctor, *ingeniero* (engineer), or *licienciado* (someone who has a higher education degree).[14]

Kim uses a peach and a coconut as metaphors to contrast U.S. informality with Japanese formality. In the United States, one of the ways informality is manifested is that people tend to be friendly toward everyone and form relationships rather easily. Yet at the same time, highly personal information or feelings that would make an individual vulnerable are seldom on display to other people. This practice is likened to a peach, with a soft exterior and a hard center. The Japanese, in contrast, are characterized as being like a coconut, with a hard exterior that is difficult to penetrate. The Japanese use formality as a shell to keep people at a distance while deciding if a relationship is desired. Once the shell is penetrated, however, the Japanese are very affectionate, generosity is all-encompassing, and personal vulnerability is not a concern.[15]

It is easy to imagine the outcome of a cross-cultural business venture if, at the initial meeting, the U.S. Americans were offering personal information about themselves, speaking in an informal manner, and using their counterparts' first names, while the Japanese were doing the opposite.

Assertiveness and Interpersonal Harmony

The second important dimension of culture that affects the communication context is the manner in which people present themselves to others. While there are many aspects of communication styles, assertiveness and interpersonal harmony directly influence the intercultural setting—be it in a business meeting, classroom, or health care context.

ASSERTIVENESS

The United States culture is widely known for its assertive communication style. It is not uncommon for U.S. Americans to register for assertiveness training classes, where they are encouraged and taught to be frank, open, and direct. Think about the style of communication displayed on "talk radio" or the MSNBC or Fox News television political shows, where participants frequently end up shouting at each other in an effort to make a point and to increase the show's ratings. In the sports arena, "trash talk" is commonplace between members of opposing teams, be they high school or professional. While the communication styles in these two settings tend to be exaggerations of the norm, they serve to illustrate the positive value that is placed on communicative assertiveness in the United States. As Lynch and Hanson point out, for Americans "Masking one's emotions is not a cultural norm."[16]

The tradition of directness, assertiveness, and aggressive behavior among Americans did not develop by chance. A culture that has a long history of valuing nonconformity, individualism, competition, freedom of expression, and even some select forms of rebellion is bound to encourage assertive behavior. The reason Americans value assertive communication, according to Nadler, Nadler, and Broome, is obvious: "North American individuals are expected to stand up for their rights, and this often involves confrontation."[17] This idea is enforced by Wenzhong and Grove:

> In a culture where individualism is as highly valued as it is in the United States, people are expected to take the initiative in advancing their personal interests and well-being and to be direct and assertive in interacting with others. High social and geographic mobility and the comparatively superficial nature of many personal attachments create a climate where interpersonal competition and a modest level of abrasiveness are tolerated and even expected.[18]

While a forceful and assertive communication style might be part of the American experience, in many cultures, and in a variety of settings, aggressive behavior makes people feel uncomfortable. For example, in the health care environment, according to Purnell and Paulanka, Filipino and Chinese nurses often feel uncomfortable with the "outspoken" and "aggressive" behavior of their American health care provider co-workers.[19]

INTERPERSONAL HARMONY

While the United States culture and some other cultures, such as Germany and Israel,[20] see assertiveness as an asset, other cultures see it as threatening and detrimental to genial interpersonal relations. Among Northeast and Southeast Asian cultures, mutual agreement, loyalty, and reciprocal obligation underlie the importance placed on harmonious relations. The Filipino culture, as we noted with our example regarding nurses, greatly values interpersonal harmony. According to Gochenour, for members of the Filipino culture, "The ultimate ideal is one of harmony—between individuals, among the members of a family, among the group divisions of society, and of all life in relationship with God."[21] Filipinos have two terms that express their conception of harmony: *amor propio* and *pakikisama*. *Amor propio* translates into English as "harmony" and refers to a very fragile sense of personal worth and self-respect. In interactions with others, it denotes being treated as a person rather than as an object. This value makes the Filipino especially vulnerable to negative remarks that may affect his or her standing in society. Consequently, Filipinos seldom criticize or verbally confront others, and if they do, it is in the most polite manner.[22] They see bluntness and frankness as uncivilized traits. Instead, they value *pakikisama*, or smooth interpersonal relations.[23]

Maintaining harmonious relations and avoiding what appears to be aggressive behavior is also a primary consideration among the Japanese. As Hall and Hall note, "A strong desire to maintain harmony characterizes the Japanese. They are very concerned about other people's feelings."[24] So strong is that concern for the feelings of others that the Japanese are notorious for avoiding the word "no," which they find harsh. In fact, many American educators and business executives who seek to understand this Japanese characteristic read Masaaki Imai's book *16 Ways to Avoid Saying No: An Invitation to Experience Japanese Management From the Inside*. This Japanese desire for harmonious relations is more a product of adhering to accepted models of behavior than it is a compelling principle. Since deviance is considered threatening and disruptive, most Japanese willingly accept and adopt normative expectations during social and professional interactions. This ensures, on the surface, a smooth-running organization and presents the appearance of a homogeneous, cooperative collective.[25] As Schneider and Silverman point out, "in their society, values and norms forcefully promote self-control and the avoidance of direct personal confrontation."[26] Accordingly, to avoid disruption and maintain harmony within the organization, the market, or the nation, Japanese business executives will sometimes make corporate profit a subordinate consideration.[27] Gao and Ting-Toomey point out that, like the Filipinos and Japanese, the Chinese "tend to regard conflict and confrontation as unpleasant and undesirable."[28] Chen and Xiao underscore this same point when they state, "It is without a doubt that harmony is one of the primordial values of Confucianism and of the Chinese culture."[29]

For reasons different from those found in Asian cultures, Mexicans also value smooth interpersonal relationships and encourage polite behavior. In the business setting, this view toward harmonious relations, according to Kras, "demands a low-key, respectful, and sometimes, a seemingly obsequious posture."[30] In addition, wanting to avoid confrontations can make the concept of "truth" situational in Mexico, and in order to sustain positive relations or make the other person feel better, Mexicans may slightly alter the facts or withhold important negative information. Condon notes that the practice of shading the truth in Mexico is so pervasive that it has become institutionalized.[31] Mexican efforts to avoid discord are seen in a number of different settings. Ruch, for example, mentions that in the business context, "When a visitor asks for information that a Mexican

doesn't have, the Mexican does his best to say something that will please the visitor."[32]

REMEMBER THIS

Interpersonal problems can arise when someone from a culture that values assertiveness interacts with a person from a culture that values social harmony.

The school setting is also a context where differences in assertiveness and harmony are acted out. Fish speaks of a multicultural classroom where Israeli and Vietnamese students demonstrated very different behavioral patterns as they apply to aggressive and complacent learning styles. According to Fish, the Vietnamese children, fearful that whatever they say will appear to be rude, will not speak during class.[33] On the other hand, Fish reports that her Israeli students not only take an active role in class, but also often criticize the teacher. You can imagine how these two different sets of rules regarding classroom behaviors might influence the learning environment.

Status Relationships

The third communication variable that influences nearly all communication settings relates to a culture's perception of and response to status. As we pointed out in Chapter 5, when we looked at Hofstede's notion of power distance, we saw that every culture and organization has specific culturally based protocols to guide interaction between people of varying social positions. Using a broad classification scale, a culture can generally be categorized as either *egalitarian*, with a low level of concern for social differences, or *hierarchical*, placing significant emphasis on status and rank.

EGALITARIAN

Egalitarianism facilitates and encourages openness among communication participants, stresses informal interaction between subordinates and seniors, and minimizes the expectation of deference and formality. A person's status is usually acquired through individual effort such as success in business or the achieving of an advanced degree—avenues that are open to everyone. This creates an environment of social mobility by encouraging the belief that everyone has the opportunity to improve his or her social status. However, individuals who enjoy positions of power often make it a habit to downplay appearances of their increased power and prestige. The United States, Australia, Israel, and New Zealand are considered highly egalitarian cultures. Most U.S. Americans are not very concerned with differences in social status and power. This is partly the result of the United States' frontier heritage, when early settlers were forced to rely on hard work to survive. The rigid social formality and protocol common in Europe at that time found little place in the harsh landscape of the colonies or along the western frontier.[34] As a result, equality, or the appearance of equality, became a cultural value that persists today. This value is easily illustrated by press reports on how American presidents spend their leisure time. Ronald Reagan was noted for chopping wood and horseback riding; Bill Clinton would often stop off at McDonald's while jogging in a T-shirt and running shorts; George W. Bush was frequently photographed clearing brush at his Texas ranch; and pictures of presidential

candidate Barack Obama show him playing in a pickup basketball game. These activities, as well as the attire of the dignitaries, allowed each of them to downplay his status and demonstrate that he was just like anyone else.

In nearly every setting, be it in the classroom or a staff meeting, manifestations of an egalitarian society can be seen. While egalitarianism can take a host of forms, Tuleja mentions one very common form: the use of names. She writes, "In the United States (depending on the organization's internal culture), subordinates are often on a first name basis with their bosses."[35] This same lack of linking names with "power" can be seen in many college and university classrooms where students call their professors by first name.

HIERARCHICAL

Cultures that subscribe to a hierarchical view of social status are in marked contrast to egalitarian cultures. In these cultures, status is normally ascribed by birth, appointment, or age. In countries like Japan, China, most Latin American countries, and Spain, differences in status are made obvious through protocols that govern many interpersonal and organizational activities. Real power is held by a few individuals, who may have achieved their position by means of family connections, level of education, marriage, or simply age. Merit and ability are often secondary considerations. Interactions between subordinates and seniors are conducted in a formal manner, and titles are always used. Seniors are often expected to assume a patriarchal role in response to the junior member's deference. In cultures that use status as a marker, teachers at all levels are accorded the utmost respect, even to the point where students are not expected to question their professors.

As noted in Chapter 3, Confucian philosophy plays a major role in the hierarchical tradition of many Asian countries.[36] Expressions of Confucian social hierarchy are clearly evident in China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Singapore. Confucianism provides a specific, hierarchical social structure and contains well-defined guidelines for relations between seniors and juniors. Morrison and his associates offer some advice that illustrates how American business executives have to adapt to these social structures when dealing with the Chinese. They write, "When entering a business meeting the senior member of your group should lead the way. Often, senior executives in a delegation do the talking; junior members do not interrupt and only speak when spoken to."[37]

In a business setting, discordant relations can quickly develop if the participants adhere to conflicting views on egalitarianism and hierarchy. The behaviors and actions of representatives from hierarchical cultures are frequently dictated by culture-bound rules relating to status.[38] One of the most vivid examples of a culture that places a value on established hierarchy is Japan. As McDaniel notes, "Hierarchy plays a much more prominent role in Japanese society than in Western nations. For the Japanese, hierarchy is a natural social division and normally permeates all aspects of their society."[39] You can notice numerous expressions of this cultural value in the business setting. Even within a Japanese organization, hierarchy is reflected by the junior person always bowing lower than the senior does. In offices, desks are normally arranged in hierarchal order. In addition, the junior will use a formal, polite level of language, while the senior may elect to use an informal style. Variations in language usage among people from hierarchical cultures are not limited to Asia. For example, in Spain, Mexico, and many of the Spanish-speaking cultures, the informal *tu* (you) is used among family, friends, and close acquaintances, but when dealing with more distant relations, the formal *usted* is used.

Communication is rule governed, and those rules shift from culture to culture.

India also has a history of distinct hierarchical divisions derived from its caste system. Although the system was dissolved by law,[40] the persistent "belief that there are qualitative differences between the castes"[41] continues to influence relationships in India.

We conclude our discussion of egalitarian and hierarchical cultures, and how these views of status affect the context, by mentioning the impact of the Internet on status. First, it is now common knowledge that one of the most influential forces of globalization in the business world is the Internet. As Cairncross notes, the "astonishing fall in the cost of transferring information around the world"[42] has forced business to act from a global perspective. In other words, the Internet has helped created a need for international businesses to rethink the whole idea of cultural differences and appropriate protocols. Second, one of the protocols most influenced by the Internet is notions about status. Because the Internet creates a kind of anonymity, it can alter perceptions of status. As Cellich and Jain observe, "Doing business on the Internet provides opportunities for junior or lower-ranked executives to interact with senior managers."[43] This ability to communicate with someone anywhere in the world without an awareness of status is particularly meaningful in those cultures and business organizations with a well-structured hierarchy, because senior representatives are often reluctant to intermingle with personnel who are junior to them. In places such as India, which is the focal point of a great deal of outsourcing, the Internet becomes a type of equalizer since, as we just noted, it is hard to assess a person's status, rank, and credibility online.

Having looked at the potential impact of the overarching variables of informality, formality, assertiveness, interpersonal harmony, and status relationships, we are ready to apply these and others to various intercultural settings. We now move from the general to the specific as we turn to the international business context. We begin by pointing out how culture is a major influence in both international business and the domestic workplace. Next, we will examine how a culture and communication interact with each other in the business setting by looking at cultural differences in (1) protocol, (2) management, (3) negotiations, (4) decision making, and (5) conflict management.

Intercultural Communication in the Business Context

The International Business Setting

We agree with Max Weber, the founder of modern sociology, when he wrote, "If we learn anything from the history of economic development, it is that culture makes all the difference."[44] We would add that it has been that way for thousands of years. Archeological evidence has revealed the existence of trade diasporas more than three thousand years ago in what is now Iran.[45] Recorded history is replete with examples of cross-cultural trade. Between 1200 and 700 B.C., the Phoenicians sailed from ports

Richard Porter

Global interdependence was clearly demonstrated when the entire world suffered the effects of the U.S. Stock Market tumbling in October of 2008.

in present-day Lebanon and established trade routes throughout the Mediterranean, traveling as far as the Atlantic coast of Spain. Goods from China were carried through Central Asia, along the Silk Road, to the Roman Empire. Later, Marco Polo is believed to have traveled this route to China, returning to Italy in the late thirteenth century with tales of riches and exotic cultures.[46] Trade and exploitation were principal motives for the establishment of European colonies in Africa, the Americas, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. As Friedman points out, this period was indeed the first phase of globalization. Friedman adds, "In this era, countries and governments (often inspired by religion or imperialism or a combination of both) led the way in breaking down walls and knitting the world together, driving integration."[47] The shift from an agrarian to an industrial society, brought about by the Industrial Revolution in the latter half of the nineteenth century, expanded and accelerated cross-cultural trade.

Although the Great Depression and the Second World War slowed down worldwide trade, once these two events ended, globalization took a giant step forward. Transportation systems, telecommunications technologies, and increasingly advanced product distribution have brought about what Cairncross calls the "death of distance"[48] by significantly reducing, or even eliminating, time- and distance-related barriers. The importance of national borders has been greatly reduced in an era characterized by international joint ventures, mergers, licensing agreements, foreign capital investment, and offshore production. These events have resulted in increased economic interdependencies among nations. This interdependence is so much a part of the world's economy that one day of global trading today is now the equivalent of an entire year of commerce in 1949.[49] This global interdependence was clearly demonstrated in January of 2008, when the world observed the ripple effect of the falling U.S. stock market. As it tumbled, the rest of the world followed right in line, proving the truth of our

notion from Chapter 1 that what happens in one part of the world can have effects all over the world. This truism is clearly expressed through the title of an article in the *Economist* magazine called "Coming of Age: The Rich Nations No Longer Dominate Global Production."[50] What is transpiring today, mainly because of globalization, is that interdependence, rather than dominance, is the watchword for doing business. In this new era, "While globalization has opened new markets to rich-world companies, it has also given birth to a pack of fast-moving, sharp-toothed new multinationals that is emerging from the poor world."[51] Woodall states this important idea as follows: "China, India, and other developing countries are set to give the world economy its biggest boost in the whole of history."[52] What should be obvious at this point is that developed and developing nations are now tied directly to an international system of economic interdependence, and most countries have at least one asset within their borders that is needed by another country.

International interdependencies in this century are not restricted to trade and finished goods. Today, if you call about your phone bill, computer, or credit card application, you may talk to someone in India, Ireland, the Bahamas, or even the Philippines. If you use a U.S. accounting firm to prepare your taxes, the forms may be completed in Bangalore, India. Communication technologies have allowed service industries to outsource tasks ranging from accounting to reading medical x-rays.[53] Offshore service centers have become so extensive that sometimes local employees are given "accent neutralization"[54] classes in an effort to suppress their native accents or are trained to affect a regional United States accent.[55]

All of the intercultural changes in the business arena that we have been discussing create an environment where "doing business" requires people from different cultures to work together. For example, in 2007, the Coca-Cola Company operated in more than two hundred countries, but the North American market (the United States and Canada) produced less than 30 percent of its net operating revenues.[56] McDonald's

Edwin McDaniel

McDonald's, like countless other American corporations, operates outlets throughout the world.

operates more than 31,000 outlets in 118 nations.[57] Nearly one-third of Starbucks' 15,000 stores are overseas,[58] including over two hundred in mainland China.[59] And the retail giant Wal-Mart has stores in Mexico, Germany, and China; it is even opening banks in Mexico.[60]

American business people are also learning how to deal with people from other cultures, because many international corporations have a broad presence in the United States. For example, Chinese firms are involved in 3,500 investment projects in the United States. This, and hundreds of other examples, caused the *San Diego Union-Tribune* to declare, "Foreigners Play Increasing Role in U.S. Economy." To buttress their assertion, the newspaper offered the following specific instances:

> From Manhattan's ritzy Essex House hotel, owned by the Dubai Investment Group, to the nationwide chains of Caribou Coffee and Church's Chicken, owned by another company serving Arab investors, foreigners are buying up bigger and bigger chunks of the country.[61]

To document further our view that you might become either "the boss" who is managing foreign workers, or the employee of an international company, we offer just a few other examples. Tesco, a British company that owns a large chain of grocery stores named "Fresh & Easy," recently opened fifty-nine stores across Southern California and Arizona in five months, and two large suppliers from the United Kingdom established processing plants in California to help provide fresh foods to the new stores.[62] A British firm has also purchased the Greyhound bus company.[63] Anheuser-Busch, maker of America's iconic Budweiser beer, was sold in 2008 to a Belgian company.[64] In 2006, the American subsidiary of a Tokyo-based corporation gained control of Coco's and Carrows restaurants, which have a combined total of 210 outlets in the western United States.[65] One of the largest transactions shifting ownership of a U.S. company to an international concern was the sale of one of General Electric's plastics divisions to a Saudi Arabian company for 11.6 billion dollars.[66]

The examples we have just cited—and we could have offered hundreds more—are representative of the rise of multinational corporations and reflect the increasing international integration of business. As Hanvanich and his associates point out, "Pressures to build and sustain global competitive advantage have changed the way firms engage in business."[67] Thomas underscores that same notion when he writes, "Virtually all business conducted today is global business,"[68] and Koehler confirms this view when he notes, "With most of the world's population and purchasing power residing outside of the United States, America's business, particularly energetic small and medium-sized firms, must fully participate in the global marketplace to ensure sustained economic growth and prosperity in the twenty-first century."[69] The intercultural contact we have been discussing has created a need for knowledge and understanding of how to conduct business in a manner that accommodates different cultural rules. In this new marketplace, knowledge of cultural differences, cross-cultural teamwork, and multicultural collaboration are essential for an organization's success. It is obvious that globalization results in individuals from one culture working not only with, but also for, individuals from another culture. This situation often proves to be difficult because, as Harris and Moran reveal, many problems can arise when one works or lives in a foreign environment. Communication across cultural boundaries is difficult. Differences in customs, behavior, and values result in problems that can be managed only through effective cross-cultural communication and interaction.[70]

CONSIDER THIS

Annie had been working for a number of years in the office of a large manufacturing company. She was happy with her position and the people she worked with—particularly her immediate supervisor. However, just before Christmas, Annie was told the company was merging with another company, and that many of the employees from the new firm would be coming to Annie's building around January 2. She was also told that she would be working for a "new boss" but that her position was secure. Annie was pleased since jobs in her town were hard to locate.

On the first day that the two workforces were combined, Annie noticed something that upset her. It seemed that some members of the male staff had made some changes to the community coffee and snack room. Not only did they put wine and beer in the icebox, but they also hung a few pin-up pictures of women in swimsuits from the Sports Illustrated *magazine's swimsuit edition. Annie asked the other female staff members what they thought about the alterations in the workroom. Most of them were also troubled by the pictures, but did not want to lose their jobs, so they remained silent. However, the pictures bothered Annie, so she decided to talk to her new supervisor. He told her to relax and not to worry about it. He said he liked the new atmosphere. Annie quit her job.*

What do you think Annie should have done?

The Domestic Business Context

Not only has the impact of intercultural contact altered the way in which international business is conducted, but events within the borders of the United States have made the need to understand different cultures a twenty-first century imperative. Perhaps the clearest statement of how the demographics of the United States are changing can be found in the data from the *American Community Survey* conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The 2006 survey revealed that 19.7 percent, or nearly one in five, of the people living in the United States spoke a language other than English at home.[71] It is apparent that through birthrates and immigration, the United States has become a nation characterized by extensive cultural diversity. Minorities are now the fastest-growing segment of the United States demography. In fact, the U.S. Census Bureau has reported that in 2007 the non-Hispanic white population accounted for 66 percent of the total U.S. population. Among minority groups, Hispanics are the largest with 15 percent of the population, followed by blacks, Asians, American Indians and Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders.[72] In the future it is estimated that more than 80 percent of the growth in the United States will come from immigration. As the population of minorities has increased, so has its impact on the United States in both the marketplace and workforce. Businesses have had to adapt their operations to appeal to these new residents. Wal-Mart sells falafel,

special olives, and even Islamic greeting cards to its Arab clients. In all large cities, nearly every market has entire sections set aside for the ethnic shoppers that frequent their stores. And, of course, most of these immigrants have jobs. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, minorities constitute the fastest-growing segment of the American labor force.[73] This escalation in minority workers is expected to increase in the years and decades to come. The *Economist* magazine recently carried a headline that read, "More and More South-East Asians are Leaving Home to Seek Work."[74] It is anticipated that the Hispanic presence in the U.S. workforce will more than double—from 11 percent in 2000 to 24 percent by 2050. Asians, the fastest-growing group in the labor force, are projected to increase from 5 percent to 11 percent between 2000 and 2050.[75]

CONSIDER THIS

Most advertisers are well aware of the fact that there are specific cultural audiences for their products. Therefore, they often advertise in magazines tailored for those audiences. Go to a magazine stand or a library and look at some popular magazines aimed at Mexican Americans and African Americans. Compare the advertisements and images in those magazines with those found in some "mainstream" publications.

Not only are there more minority workers in today's labor force, but the number of minority entrepreneurs is also expanding. In 2001, the United States Department of Commerce found that "minority-owned businesses grew more than four times as fast as U.S. firms overall between 1992 and 1997."[76] Hispanic businesses alone grew at a rate of 31 percent in a five-year period, to the point where there are now 1.6 million businesses in the United States owned by Hispanics.[77]

The implication of the wilderness of statistics in this chapter is that internationally and within the United States' domestic workforce, most business transactions involve culturally diverse populations. What this means is that successful management of this diverse labor force will demand increased awareness and acceptance of varying cultural values and greater intercultural communication competence. Many American corporations, recognizing the importance of cultural diversity among workers, have instituted training programs designed to increase employee awareness of cultural differences and raise intercultural competence. Managers in this culturally varied environment will also have to be constantly alert to the hazards of discrimination, ethnocentrism, and sexual harassment. What we are suggesting is that the multicultural business setting demands workers and employers that can adapt to this contemporary workplace. The reminder of this chapter seeks to help you with that adaptation process.

Communication in the Multicultural Business Context

The development of business communication skills in a multinational marketplace is a challenging endeavor. Such seemingly universal concepts as management, negotiation, decision making, and conflict management are frequently viewed differently in one culture than in another. We now turn our attention toward the intercultural business context and some of the ways cultures deal with (1) business protocol, (2) management, (3) negotiations, and (4) conflict management.

Business Protocol

Since business protocol involves forms of ceremony, etiquette, and a correct code of conduct, it is important to understand these rules in any business transaction. However, like most rules of behavior discussed in this book, business "rules" are culture bound. You can see a difference in intercultural "regulations" in something as simple as a popular bumper sticker in the United States, which reads "Rules Are for Fools." While this sticker may express the high value Americans place on individualism, independence, and difference, you will remember from Chapter 4 that this view is not one shared by all cultures. In fact, in most parts of the world, culturally correct protocol is both expected and respected. To introduce you to some of the variations in protocol, we will examine (1) initial contacts, (2) greeting behavior, (3) personal appearance, (4) gift giving, and (5) conversational taboos.

INITIAL CONTACTS

When engaging in international business, the ways in which you establish *initial contact* can range from making an e-mail, to placing a brief unsolicited telephone call, to writing a formal letter or using a "go-between" or emissary. Which of these procedures is best is directly related to the culture you wish to contact. If you fail to follow correct protocol and violate the rules of that culture, you will likely not gain access to the organization. A few examples should help clarify this point.

We begin with Japan. As Nishiyama points out, the typical American approach of a cold call or a letter of introduction will not work in Japan. Instead, the most effective means of establishing a business connection in Japan is through a formal, face-to-face meeting with the sole objective of making introductions.[78] India has much the same attitude about initial contacts, because "India is a relationship-based culture" and therefore first exchanges often are "made through common business associates."[79] In Latin American cultures, Morrison, Conaway, and Borden suggest you "use a local *persona bien colocada* (well-connected person) to make introductions and contacts for you."[80]

While the "cold call" (contacting someone without an appointment) is common in the United States, we have already pointed out that the use of trusted intermediaries is common, and often required, in many other cultures. Egypt is another good example of this code of behavior. If you want an appointment in Egypt, you must send a letter of introduction to an Egyptian contact person who can facilitate arranging a meeting. Endicott suggests that "Business by 'who you know' has always been an influential force in Egypt."[81]

In Africa, the use of an intermediary is also essential; this is exemplified by the Congolese proverb that states, "The friends of our friends are our friends." Richmond and Gestrin mention that intermediaries can open doors, ensure a warm reception for your upcoming visit, and assess the prospects for the proposal you plan to present. An intermediary is an absolute must in Africa when approaching someone of a higher status.[82] We add China to the list of cultures that depend on go-betweens. As Zinzius notes, "Nothing is possible in China without contacts."[83] There is even a Chinese proverb that states, "The go-between wears out a thousand sandals." The Chinese rely heavily on interpersonal relations, called *guanxi*, built and maintained through mutual obligations that begin with family and friends and extend to organizational acquaintances. An international businessperson coming to China will have to establish a *guanxi* network, which may take considerable time—even years. The process can be expedited through the use of a mediator, preferably someone who is already well known in the Chinese business community.[84]

Digital Vision/Getty Images

Greeting behaviors are rule governed and often vary from culture to culture.

GREETING BEHAVIOR

United States. Once a meeting has been arranged, it is important that an effort be made to use the greeting practices of the host culture. Americans tend to be informal and friendly. In fact, "Persons from other cultures are surprised by the informality of U.S. Americans who often say 'Hi' to complete strangers. In most countries of the world, saying 'Hi' to strangers is uncommon."[85] In the United States, both men and women shake hands on meeting and leaving. First names generally are used except when addressing very senior persons or in formal situations. Business cards are exchanged in business settings but seldom in strictly social gatherings. The greeting behaviors we have just mentioned are typical of Americans and Canadians, but uncommon in many other cultures. Let us briefly look at some of those cultures.

China. The Chinese business community is more formal than is the United States, and as such, the Chinese always greet the most senior person first.[86] They also use titles that

clearly reflect the cultural emphasis on hierarchy. The use of titles by the Chinese is so pervasive that it often extends to work positions such as Chief Engineer, Accountant, Department Manager, and even Foreman.[87] In China, the order of personal names is reversed from that in the West. The Chinese place their family name (surname) first and their given name last. For example, in the name *Wang Jintao*, Wang is the family name and Jintao is the given name, so in English, the proper address would be "Mr. Wang." Many culturally uninformed Westerners have made the mistake of addressing their counterpart by his or her first name, thinking it was his or her last name. The Chinese have widely adopted the Western handshake for initial and subsequent greetings. However, this does not extend to the common Western practice of placing a hand on the back or an arm around the shoulder. As Harris and Moran indicate, a slight bow and a brief shake of the hand is most appropriate.[88] There are other nonverbal gestures in China that can carry different meanings from those assigned in the West. For instance, the head nod is used by the Chinese to acknowledge the speaker, not to signal agreement with what is being said. The hierarchical nature of Chinese society also dictates that direct eye contact should be avoided. Although in the West you are expected to maintain a high degree of eye contact during discussions, the Chinese consider this to be rude and disrespectful.[89]

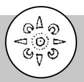
India. In India, and in other Hindu cultures, a common social greeting is the *namaste*,[90] where one presses the hands together near the chest, as in prayer, and bows slightly toward the other person. Because of the high value placed on status relationships in India, spatial relationships are also a part of greeting behavior. For example, Kumar and Sethi point out that interpersonal "distance increase[s] when one is talking with one's superior or when one is relating to someone who comes from a lower rung of the hierarchy."[91]

Japan. A common greeting ritual in Japan is the bow. As Ferraro notes, "Bowing conveys a good deal of social information in Japan."[92] As is the case with so much of Japanese behavior, the bow is directly linked to status and rank. What is less well known about the bow is that, among the Japanese, the bow is a highly refined practice filled with many subtle nuances as to who bows first, how low, and how long. These distinctions, which the Japanese begin to learn as children, can be difficult for a foreigner to master. Yet some of the underlying meanings of bowing are important for Westerners to understand and appreciate. To begin, bowing can serve a variety of functions. It can be used to initiate interaction, augment many parts of the conversation, and even mark the end of the interaction.[93] According to Dunung, the complexity of bowing is so great that the Japanese recognize this truth and do not expect foreigners to bow. It is best not to try to imitate Japanese bows unless you have studied the art thoroughly, for your own good intentions may result in an improper bow that offends someone. For foreign men and women, a respectful slight nod of the head and shoulders will be considered appropriate in most situations.[94]

Another important protocol in greeting the Japanese businessperson is the exchange of business cards. Like so much of human communication, the simple act of exchanging cards is deeply rooted in Japanese values. Hall and Hall link the Japanese value of status to the trading of business cards in the following paragraph:

> The Japanese are very hierarchical and have systems for ranking everyone and everything; therefore, the first thing a Japanese wants to know about any outsider is where that individual is located in the company. The Japanese cannot relate properly to someone without this information. This is why business calling cards (*meishi*) are important in Japan.[95]

Business cards should be printed on one side in English and on the other in Japanese. They should also contain enough detailed information so that one's specific position within the company is clearly spelled out. When receiving a card, you should carefully read it before placing it in your pocket or purse. If you sit down to discuss business, the cards should be placed on the table in an order that corresponds to the seating positions of those across from you. This provides an easy way of remembering names, positions, and seniority. Unfortunately, culturally uninformed Americans sometimes take the card and, with but a passing glance at the contents, tuck it away in their pocket. Such behavior, as you would imagine, is perceived as very impolite.

REMEMBER THIS 

Cultures have very different ways for people to greet each other. Some cultures are formal while others are very informal. Some bow, some hug, and others shake hands.

Arab. Like the Japanese, Arabs have a very elaborate and complex structure of greeting behaviors. There are, by some estimates, thirty different blessings, both situational and relational, that can be part of the greeting.[96] As Nydell notes, "There are formulas for greetings in the morning and evening, for meeting after a long absence, for meeting for the first time, and for welcoming someone who has returned from a trip."[97] These various greetings involve numerous handshakes and, for the men, embraces and kisses on both cheeks. Titles are very important to Arabs, and are always used in the business context. Business cards, printed in both Arabic and English, are routinely exchanged. It is important to remember, as we pointed out in the last chapter, that Muslims never greet by shaking with the left hand, because it is used for personal hygiene.

Mexico. The usual greeting in Mexico is the handshake. Mexicans also often shake hands when saying farewell. As we noted when we discussed touching behavior in the last chapter, it is not unusual for men to hug (*abrazo)* when greeting each other. As is the case in nearly every business situation, part of the greeting should be an exchange of business cards; these should have English on one side and Spanish on the other side.[98]

The proper use of titles is also important when establishing rapport with business people from Central and South America. Mexico is an excellent example of this point. As Gordon and Williams write, "Titles are very important in Mexico, particularly in business. Using the appropriate titles will assist you in gaining the respect of Mexican colleagues and subordinates."[99] While there are special titles for people with college degrees, engineers, architects, accountants and the like, the most common term of respect is *Don* for males and *Doña* for female.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Although we discussed nonverbal communication in the last chapter, and stressed cultural differences with regard to personal appearance, we need to remind you once again of the importance of personal appearance as it relates to protocol. As we have noted throughout this book, the United States is an informal culture. This informality is reflected by the policy of "casual Friday," which many U.S. organizations use to promote a relaxed dress code among employees. The "dot-com" organizations in Silicon Valley are noted for their very informal dress code, and young entrepreneurs can often be seen

conducting business in polo shirts and jeans. On many college and university campuses, you can find professors who dress like their students. Other cultures are more formal, and this attitude of formality extends to people's personal appearance, especially in business interactions. In Japan, for example, a black suit is the standard uniform of most Japanese corporate employees. Dress that differentiates an individual from the majority is not readily accepted. Even though the younger generation of Japanese has started to wear more color and different styles, conservative clothes are still the norm among upper-level managers and executives.[100] German businessmen and businesswomen also dress conservatively; dark suits and white shirts are standard attire.[101]

Mexico is yet another country where appropriate dress is part of the business setting. In fact, success in much of Mexico is tied to appearances. Kras speaks to this cultural consideration when she writes:

> Good clothes and careful grooming are expected of anyone in a managerial position. Most executives dress with the same old-world formality that characterizes their manners. They know its importance in maintaining the respect of their subordinates. They likewise expect their staff to be well dressed and well groomed, certainly at the senior level.[102]

Just as in Japan, in most Asian countries business executives dress fashionably and expect their counterparts to embody this same aura of success. As Schmidt and his associates note, "Professional attire is essential for formal business gatherings in Asian countries."[103] Western businesswomen working in Islamic nations, or with Muslim counterparts, should dress conservatively and modestly with a high neckline, sleeves extending below the elbow, and hemlines past the knees. Pants and pantsuits should not be worn. It is easy to imagine the consequences if a businessperson from the United States, dressed in slacks and a brightly colored polo shirt, arrived at a meeting with his or her German counterparts, who were wearing dark suits and ties. In this instance, the first impression would probably be less than positive.

GIFT GIVING

An old adage says, "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts." However, among many cultures gift giving is a common practice and part of business protocol. Martin and Chaney introduce this important business custom in the following paragraph:

> Gift-giving practices and seasons vary around the world. In religiously oriented countries, gift giving is done during religious celebrations; in non-religious countries, specific times of the year are devoted to gift giving. Certain events, such as the conclusion of a business contract, may also necessitate gift giving. Because gift giving is an integral part of building global relationships, you need to understand the subtleties of the gift-giving art.[104]

The exchanging of gifts in the business context invokes a number of stated and unstated protocols. One problem is that individualistic Western cultures, especially that of the United States, often view extensive giving and the payment of money as a form of bribery. The United States anathema toward commercial bribery is so strong that it is prohibited by the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which "makes it unlawful to bribe foreign government officials to obtain or retain business."[105] China has also enacted legislation to prohibit bribery in business transactions. In 2002, regulations were established that designated gifts in excess of $180 (U.S.) as bribery.[106] In spite of these impediments the exchange of gifts remains a common business protocol, but

the international business representative must be able to distinguish between what is considered a gift and what is seen as a bribe. From the perspective of the United States, suitable gifts for exchange among employees from international organizations are small, relatively inexpensive mementos presented to commemorate an event or as an expression of appreciation and solidarity. Acuff reports, "Small gifts—such as pens, cups, and key rings engraved with your company logo—are not only acceptable, but virtually essential in global business. Home and office decorations and books and magazines are also popular."[107]

For the businessperson going abroad, it is useful to know not only local views concerning gift giving, but also what gifts are appropriate in the culture where business will be conducted and when they should be given. Perhaps more so than in any other culture, gift giving in Japan is highly ritualistic. For example, the Japanese expect you to open the gift they offer to you, and yet will put aside the gift you give them and open it later. Putting the gift away and opening it at another time is also the rule in Thailand. As part of the formality of the gift exchange in Japan, and as a means of showing respect, "gifts are usually given and received with both hands."[108] And, according to Nishiyama, gifts are exchanged at the beginning of any new business relationship.[109] In Mexico and China, as well, gifts are part of a business relationship. With regard to China, Cellich and Jain note, "In China, the protocol followed during the negotiation process should include giving small, inexpensive presents."[110]

Understanding what constitutes an appropriate gift is as important as knowing when to give one. In Guatemala and Japan, white flowers should not be given as a gift; they are normally associated with funerals, as are chrysanthemums in Italy.[111] Alcoholic beverages should not be given in Islamic countries or to a Muslim counterpart. Additionally, when giving a gift to a Muslim, you should not use your left hand, for as we mentioned elsewhere, this is considered the unclean hand. Dresser points out that in Japan, "To give a clock as a gift is equivalent to saying, 'I wish you were dead,'"[112] because it reminds the recipient that time is running out. While thirteen is an inauspicious number in the United States, gifts in numbers of four are

CONSIDER THIS

Todd Davis was president of one of the largest international book publishing companies in the world. His company had just opened a new building complex in Boston, and they intended to centralize operations by bringing most of their employees, both domestic and international, to this one central location. Since Mr. Davis wanted to make a good impression and have everyone feel welcome in the United States, he decided to present all the new senior international managers with a welcome gift. After the gifts were presented, Mr. Davis had the strangest feeling that something had gone wrong. Here are some of the presents he gave to his staff:

- *a. The employee from Egypt was given a bottle of expensive rum.*
- *b. The Japanese manager was given a clock and asked to open it in front of everyone.*
- *c. The supervisor from India was given an expensive wallet made of cowhide.*
- *d. The employee from France was given a bottle of American wine.*

What happened?

inappropriate in Japan because the Japanese words for *four* and *death* are pronounced the same, though written differently.

As the preceding examples indicate, the rules for gift giving vary considerably across cultures and an exhaustive listing of them would fill the remainder of this book. Therefore, we recommend that prior to leaving for your international destination, you should learn as much as possible about the gift-related customs of your host nation. You will need to know if a gift is expected, what type is appropriate, when to give a gift, and how it should be presented. While these seem like small, inconsequential considerations, without an understanding of what is proper and improper, you run the risk of destroying the international transaction before it even begins.

CONVERSATIONAL TABOOS

As you know from personal experience, meeting another person, whether for business or pleasure, unusually involves some "small talk" and socializing as a way of getting to know one another. However, the choice of topics employed in that early conversation must follow cultural rules. Observation of those rules demands that you learn what topics are acceptable to discuss in the host culture, and what subjects are taboo. For Americans, Chaney and Martin point out that "the most popular topic of small talk seems to be the weather or comments on some aspect of the physical surroundings, such as the arrangement of the meeting room or some aspect of the building."[113] As the conversation continues, Americans, because they are uncomfortable with silence, curious, and believe in gathering information about their counterparts, might ask personal questions of the other person. For American businesspersons, personal questions are not actually considered taboo in the business context. Hence, you might hear the most well intentioned American ask questions such as "What do you do?" "How long have you been with your company?" "Do you have a family?" All of these topics are considered too personal in most cultures.

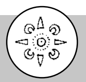
While most cultural taboo topics are apparent, let us offer a few examples. In much of the world, you should not bring up topics related to politics. Schmidt and his colleagues offer a specific case when they note:

> Although people in the United States frequently argue politics, doing so with a Chilean, an Argentine, or a Venezuelan may create an uncomfortable situation because of unpleasant past or current events in their countries' memory. Discussing sensitive social issues, especially those related to religion and ethnic groups, should be avoided.[114]

A few more examples will help clarify our point about taboo topics. While in the United States, it would be very common to ask your counterpart, "How is your family?" Such a question in Saudi Arabia would be highly inappropriate.[115] And with regard to South Africa, Martin and Chaney say that you should "avoid asking personal questions, such as a person's marital status; also avoid discussions of ethnic differences or politics."[116]

We conclude by alerting you to the danger of telling a joke. Humor does not travel well across cultures, because there are vast differences as to what a culture defines as humorous. In the United States women, the elderly, and people in power (politicians) are often the target of jokes. In many cultures, poking fun at these three groups is not considered humorous. Irony is common in the United States, but it is not usually understood in Japan.

INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT

REMEMBER THIS 

Managers who work with different cultures will have to develop innovative culturally appropriate techniques for motivating their employees.

We begin our analysis of the influence of management styles with the following case study:

> James has been a manager with MicroTech, Inc., for eight years and is considered to be on a fast track to the executive ranks. Approximately six months ago, he was transferred from the home office in Seattle to take over as head of the Tokyo branch, his first international assignment. Soon after arrival in Japan, James began implementing some of the management programs that had made him a success in the United States. In one program, the top performer from each department was designated every month. Each of the departmental awardees was presented with a desk plaque at a ceremony in front of his co-workers, given a gift certificate worth $100, and had his picture placed in the lobby of the office building. Recently, James noticed a sharp drop in productivity and office morale seemed to be very low. Some of the workers even started complaining about having to attend the monthly award presentations where just one worker was selected as the "Top Performer."

As the above case study indicates, the tasks of a business manager are multifaceted and varied. The ultimate objective is to motivate employees to work cooperatively and productively in the achievement of a specific goal.[117] For an international manager, the complexity of these tasks is compounded by the influence of culture.[118] As Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner note, "Even with experienced international companies, many well-intended 'universal' applications of management theory have turned out badly."[119] This is because cultures have different views of what constitute good and bad management techniques. Schmidt is even blunter in his assessment: "American business schools are proud of their management theories and feel they are universally applicable. However, the American style of management may not apply outside the borders of the [United States]."[120] As students of intercultural communication, you need to recognize how businesses outside of the United States perceive the concept of management. According to Early and Ang, "an understanding of these cultural differences will increase your ability to successfully meet the many demands placed on an international manager."[121] Two of the major differences that Early and Ang mention relate to (1) managerial leadership, and (2) how managers deal with the decision-making process within the organization.

Leadership Styles

UNITED STATES

Managers in every culture reflect the key values of that culture. As Guirdham notes, "There is widespread agreement that what is expected of leaders or managers, what they may and may not do, and the influence they have, varies considerable as a result of culture."[122] You can observe the influence of culture on management style by recalling the values of the United States that we discussed in Chapter 5. We noted that U.S. managers act out a style that stresses "doing" over "being," individualism over

CONSIDER THIS

In what major ways does the U. S. style of management differ from the traditional Japanese style?

collectivism, and low power distance instead of high power distance. Additionally, research on managers in the United States reveals that they reward individual achievement and initiative, action, and results, and seek to reduce status differences.[123] Even the manner in which managers motivate their staff reflects cultural values. In doing-oriented cultures, such as the United States, managers often inspire "employees with promises of promotions, raises, bonuses, and other forms of public recognition."[124] As you shall see in the remainder of this section, managers in other cultures generate a very different set of values as they attempt to guide and direct their subordinates.

JAPAN

We return to the case study we presented earlier in this section to highlight some cultural differences in managerial styles. It was clear in our story that James made little effort to increase his cultural knowledge of the Japanese prior to departing on his international assignment. Even a brief examination would have disclosed that the Japanese culture is traditionally group oriented and individual attention is avoided. James's program of recognizing and awarding individual employees was directly opposed to the Japanese perception that all achievements are a product of the entire workgroup's efforts, and no one individual should be singled out for recognition. A characteristic feature of Japanese management style is the high value placed on harmoniously integrating all employees into the organization, which is viewed as an extended family. James's monthly award ceremony only served to embarrass the recipients and disgruntle the co-workers by making one member of the "family" more important than another. In short, the program that had worked so well for James in the United States produced only falling morale and lower productivity in Japan.

Another important aspect of Japanese managerial style can be found in the expression "every person is either junior or senior." As mentioned elsewhere in the book, Japan, while being a collective culture on most levels, is also a hierarchical culture. As Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner point out, a respect for one's superior "is seen as a measure of your commitment to the organization and its mission."[125] Therefore, while the manager stresses group achievement, he is concurrently afforded great respect.

KOREA AND CHINA

Other Asian cultures also have a management style that emphasizes group harmony at the same time that it stresses that everyone in the company should know his or her proper place. In Korea, for example, Morrison and his associates point out, "The Korean boss is king of his (or rarely, her) company. His employees defer to him and treat him with great respect."[126] Power relationships are also the ultimate determinant of Chinese social interaction—both in and out of the business setting. In Confucian-influenced cultures, seniority is the major source of power. In China, as well as most Asian nations, seniority derives from age and length of service in the organization. Seniority not only commands respect; it disarms criticism in the Chinese society."[127] Schmidt develops this important idea in more detail when he writes:

> Someone with a high-level rank shows a certain respect for inferiors, however, differences of status are always present. If a manager were to delegate decision-making to a subordinate, it implies that the manager is unable to make the decisions himself. In a large power distance country such as Singapore, managers tend to be autocratic or paternalistic.[128]

MEXICO

When you turn to Mexico, you can observe another managerial approach that emphasizes status relationships. Kras summarizes those relationships:

> Mexican executives have great respect for authority. Their upbringing has inculcated in them an acceptance of absolute authority on the part of parents and, at times, elders. As a result, young executives never question or even comment on a decision of their superiors, even if they totally disagree with it."[129]

If the differences that Kras mentions seem familiar, it is because they directly relate to our discussion of power distance from Chapter 5. Gordon and Williams link management to power distance in the following paragraph:

> The Mexican culture has a tendency to accept large power distances. That is, in general, Mexicans believe that everyone has their place in an order of inequality. Bosses and subordinates each view the other as different types of people. Subordinates believe that their bosses are and should be inaccessible and that bosses have certain privileges by innate right.[130]

Because most Mexican workers will extend the same power distance relationships to executives from the United States, you might find this gulf between worker and management difficult to accept. Yet one of the hallmarks of any successful manager is the ability to adapt to various business practices, regardless of personal cultural perceptions.

Decision-Making Styles

Every manager, regardless of the culture, must make important decisions. Adler, quoting the famous organization theorist Herbert Simon, writes, "Decision making plays a central role in managing."[131] Decision making can occur in such diverse contexts as personnel management, new product development, market expansion, sales initiatives, and the acceptance or rejection of a proposal, among others. To be effective, international business managers must be aware of who makes decisions and how those decisions are made. In the U.S. corporate sector, decisions are usually the product of a top-down process, disseminated downward through an authoritative or semi-authoritative structure. Decisions are generally made by a key group of executives who are expected to take full responsibility for the company's decisions.[132] This procedure is a result of an American cultural heritage that emphasizes egalitarianism, independence, individualism, frequent change, and a willingness to deal with conflict. In U.S. companies, the authority to make strategic decisions resides with a few top-level individuals, which allows for a quick process once the appropriate, and often legally mandated, studies (such as a market analysis or environmental survey) have been finished. United States managers generally expect to be asked for their input, but there is no guarantee that this will occur, or that their

opinions will influence the final outcome. While corporate decisions are often made very quickly, implementation can take considerably longer. Because they may have no prior knowledge of the changes, affected employees need time to understand, accept, and adapt to the new requirements. If the workers do not agree with or understand the changes, their resistance can slow or even halt implementation.[133]

Managers in many Arab and Nigerian companies, like those in the United States, also exercise authoritative control over the rank-and-file employees when making decisions. Rice captures the Arab approach in the following sentences:

> The coercive style of management is a common phenomenon in most Arab countries. The coercive or authoritative manner can be illustrated by "Do it the way I tell you," a style involving clear instructions to subordinates, without listening to or permitting much subordinate input. Immediate compliance and obedience are expected and tight control is maintained.[134]

In Nigeria, managers are perceived as holding high-level positions and the delegation of authority to others is almost nonexistent.[135] Workers in a strong managerial culture may even find it awkward to be asked for input and may wonder why a person of higher status is even asking for their opinion. In fact, in Nigerian business culture, seeking such input from other people can lower a manager's credibility.

Unlike the three examples just cited, there are many cultures where the manager involves a group in nearly every step of the decision-making process. Japan is an excellent example of a culture where the group decision-making process is preferred over the individualistic approach. A strong group orientation and emphasis on social stability are salient considerations in Japan's consensus-based decision making. In contrast to the U.S. top-down model, decision making in large Japanese corporations usually begins with mid-level managers and follows a bottom-up procedure known as *ringi seido*. In this process, one employee or a few employees prepare(s) a written proposal (*ringi sho*) that takes the form of "a subordinate respectfully consulting the opinion of a superior."[136] All of the involved organizational sections will subject the proposal to comprehensive discussions (*nemawashi*), often even before receiving the formal document. At each level, the merits and possible impact of the suggestion will be examined, and if everyone is in agreement, the manager will endorse the proposal and send it onward. If approved, the document will ultimately circulate to the upper management and executive levels. When a consensus emerges, the proposal becomes policy. Everyone must be in agreement, or at least outwardly profess agreement. Quite naturally, getting everyone to agree can take considerable time and effort. Detailed information relating to every aspect of the proposal must be obtained, disseminated, studied, and discussed. Should dissent arise, additional time is required for further discussions and consultations, which may take place in the workplace during the day and continue in restaurants and bars after scheduled working hours. Once a consensual decision is achieved, however, implementation is rapid and all-encompassing, a result of the broad employee involvement in the decision process from start to finish. Everyone is given the opportunity to voice his or her opinion and discuss the proposal before it is finally approved. As a result, employees are already familiar with the proposal, its impact, and actions needed for implementation.

The differences in decision-making processes between the countries we mentioned and the United States illustrate the influence of culture in international business. However, an awareness of the difference is often insufficient to provide an international

business with the necessary cultural competence, which requires both an awareness of differences and an understanding of the cultural factors motivating the dissimilarities.

Intercultural Business Negotiations

Visit the business section of any large bookstore and you will find numerous texts on negotiation. Using the keywords "international negotiation" to search Amazon.com will bring up over 2,700 entries. If you Google "international negotiations," you will retrieve over 2.7 million entries. This is an easy way to discover the critical role that negotiation plays in international business. The process is so important that some estimates suggest international executives spend more than 20 percent of their time in negotiation activities.[137] This is probably a very conservative estimate, considering that negotiations are integral to all international mergers, joint ventures, imports and exports, patent licensing agreements, and every other cross-cultural commercial undertaking. Both domestic and international business negotiations involve representatives from different organizations working to achieve mutually agreeable solutions, while concurrently trying to minimize differences, misunderstandings, and conflicts. To obtain these objectives, they rely on communication. The role of communication is so important that Drake calls it the "life-blood of negotiation," and yet it is an area often overlooked in intercultural negotiation studies.[138]

Differing Perceptions of Negotiations

As you might suspect, culture plays a critical role when representatives from different cultural backgrounds set out to try to reach an accord acceptable to both sides. So demanding is the task that one experienced negotiator has characterized "cross-cultural and international settings as the most challenging."[139] This challenge arises because cross-cultural negotiation participants are influenced by their respective national bargaining styles. These styles are often a product of contrasting historical legacies, diverse definitions of trust, different cultural values, a built-in level of ambiguity, dissimilar decision-making processes, contrasting views toward protocol, varied attitudes toward risk taking, and dissimilar perceptions of time.[140] Even a culture's attitude toward formality and informality will find its way into a business meeting.[141] What we are suggesting is that culture will affect how people view the negotiation process as a whole, their perception of their counterparts, and how they actually conduct the bargaining sessions. For example, in the United States, the approach to negotiations is a product of the classical Greek tradition of rhetorical eloquence, argumentation, debate, and persuasion.[142] Drawing on this Aristotelian legacy, United States trade and corporate representatives frequently enter into negotiations with a direct, somewhat confrontational approach. They commonly view the bargaining process as adversarial in nature, driven by the underlying objective of winning. There is also an emphasis on quick results that will maximize profits, which produces a short-term perspective. Relationships with the other side, especially long-term associations, are a secondary consideration, if considered at all.

The outlook of the United States can easily create problems when American businesspeople negotiate with members of collective-based cultures. For example, Japanese and Chinese negotiators take a long-term view toward business ventures. Their first goals are to work on building a relationship, establishing a level of trust, and determining the desirability of entering into an extended association with the other organization. This personal approach is also the case in Mexico. "Mexican executives are not strongly com-

REMEMBER THIS

When Japanese and Americans are involved in negotiations it is important to consider:

Japanese Negotiation Style

a. *Spend long periods of time discussing key issues.*
b. *Understate the initial position so there is room to negotiate*
c. *Attempt to avoid conflicts and confrontations.*
d. *Search for areas of agreement.*
e. *Avoid losing "face."*
f. *Start with some early discussion to "break the ice" before opening actual negotiations.*

United States Negotiation Style

a. *Advocate a position so that decisions can be reached early.*
b. *Overemphasize the first position (to present a convincing stance).*
c. *Do not shun adversarial positions.*
d. *Seek to reduce formality.*
e. *Look for a "win" instead of compromise.*
f. *Employ direct communication.*

petitive in the sense of wanting to surpass the performance of their colleagues. They value a friendlier, more relaxed atmosphere at work, free of conflict and confrontation (which they try to avoid whenever possible)."[143] The non-confrontational philosophy in these cultures is more collegial and the focus is on mutual interests, giving rise to a "win-win"[144] perspective. This is quite in contrast to the more aggressive American view of "business is business." The Asian and Mexican view of win-win and non-aggressive negotiations is also in stark contrast to the one found in the Middle East. Here a negotiator should be forceful and dynamic but also be seen as a person who is sincere and committed to his or her beliefs. As Hooker points out, in the Middle East "negotiation is a skill roughly on the level of brain surgery."[145] The Russians are yet another group that thinks negotiations are simply a forum for debate and an opportunity to convince the other side of the rightfulness of their position. The Russians often interpret an offer to make concessions as an indication of weakness. Rather than compromise on an issue, they will simply reiterate their original arguments in the expectation that the other negotiating team will ultimately realize the correctness of the Russian position.[146]

The Selection of Negotiators

Part of any preparation for cross-cultural negations should include an analysis of who will be sitting across from you at the negotiation table. Put in slightly different terms, the social or organizational status of members of the negotiating teams is another important cultural consideration. The selection of a negotiating team is rooted in culture, and the criteria can include knowledge of the subject matter, family connections, negotiation experience, age, status, technical knowledge, individual attributes, and the like. However, as we just noted, "Different cultures assign different importance to these criteria in the choosing of negotiators."[147]

The United States is strongly egalitarian, so U.S. Americans are prone to select members based on their proven managerial abilities, competitiveness, and verbal abilities, with little concern for their position within the company. They are selected not only because of their status, but also because of their efficiency and even their persuasive skills. Their aptitude for "achieving goals with the least expenditure of time and money"[148] is also considered. In other cultures, different traits influence one's selection to be part of the negotiation group. In China, Japan, and the Middle East, the status of team members is of considerable importance. The inclusion of high-ranking company officers or individuals from influential families is often an indication that the company is serious about negotiations. In East Asia, the number of people assigned to the team will also signal the level of importance attached to the negotiations—the more participants, the greater the importance.

The age of the negotiators can also be a factor. The Chinese and Koreans, in part because of the influence of the Confucian attitude toward the elderly, usually send older members of the company to head the negotiation team.[149] But in Western societies, especially the United States, age is less an issue than expertise or competency. A team of bright young United States engineers sent to negotiate the specifics of a technology transfer project with a Chinese corporation may well encounter difficulties just because of their youthfulness. The Chinese negotiators, typically around fifty years of age, may have trouble seeing the United States team as credible or competent.[150] And in Japan, according to Nishiyama, "it is almost an insult to the Japanese if young junior American managers are assigned to represent their company in Japan."[151] You can find a similar attitude toward age in Malaysia, where, according to Gannon, "Malaysians frequently defer to the more senior or elderly member of the organization, who will generally be the first to speak at a meeting."[152] The gender of the team members can also play a role in negotiations, especially in Muslim countries. In Saudi Arabia, where women are considered secondary to men in the business arena, Saudi negotiators may have difficulty interacting with a female negotiator. The issue is so sensitive that some experts advise against including women on the negotiating team when dealing with Saudis.[153]

Business Ethics and Negotiations

As you will see in Chapter 11, culture shapes one's ethics, on both a personal and national level. As part of planning for a commercial negotiation session, it is important that you understand the business ethics of your host culture. As discussed earlier, the United States has instituted laws prohibiting the payment of bribes or the giving of gifts in connection with business dealings. In some countries, however, bribery, financial payments, or gifts are considered a natural part of the negotiation process. So common is bribery as a form of "doing business" that many cultures have special names for the activity. "In Mexico, bribes are known as *mordida;* in Southeast Asia, *kumshaw*; and in the Middle East, *baksheesh*."[154] What we are suggesting is that what may appear to members of an American delegation to be unethical behavior may well be commonplace in another part of the world. For example, in India, "a society based on relationships, a reward for personal services is not necessary regarded as corrupt."[155] The place of bribery and ethics in Russia is clearly spelled out by Morrison and his associates in the following example: "Very little gets done in Russia without using *blat*—which is Russian for 'connections' or 'influence.'

REMEMBER THIS

Cultures have very different "personalities" when engaging in intercultural negotiations. There are differences with regard to:

a. Being direct or indirect when speaking

b. Respecting age or respecting youth

c. Being formal or informal

d. Working at a slow pace or a rapid pace

e. Encouraging group harmony or individual assertiveness

f. Working collectively or as individuals

Blat involves an exchange of favors; when you do something for someone, they owe you a favor. Gifts–monetary or otherwise—are often part of this exchange."[156]

These are but a few examples illustrating the appropriateness or inappropriateness of providing payment to facilitate an international business arrangement. You can imagine what the consequences might be if this process is not understood. So the question remains—what are you to do when confronted with a negotiation team from a culture that has a very different business ethic from your own? We believe that the best answer to this dilemma is presented by Ferraro as he offers clear advice to any American negotiating with another culture:

> Even though this cross-cultural ethical relativity causes a good deal of ambiguity, it remains imperative that successful international business people avoid, at all costs, violating ethical principles, both their own and [those of] their business partners. Acting ethically and with integrity is not only the right thing to do, but is also good for business and one's career over the long haul.[157]

Participating in Intercultural Business Negotiations

A premise we have employed throughout this chapter is stated by Cellich and Jain: "Communication between two negotiators tends to be more difficult and complex when it involves people from diverse cultural environments than when it involves people with similar backgrounds."[158] A major part of the difficulty can be traced to dissimilar communication styles. Let us now look at five styles that can create problems. Specifically, we turn to issues of (1) formality and status, (2) pace and patience, (3) emotional displays, (4), direct and indirect forms of communication, and (5) evidence and "truth."

FORMALITY AND STATUS

Earlier in the chapter, we discussed how cultural views of formality, titles, and status can influence people's dress, actions, and communication style. We now remind you of this essential idea, since it is an important feature at the negotiation table. As Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner point out, "Many a deal has been lost because the representative was not seen to have high status back home."[159] Negotiators from the United States, a highly informal culture, tend to avoid titles and are quick to use first names soon

after being introduced to someone at the start of a negotiation meeting. Adler further explains the U.S. style in the following paragraph:

> The United States prides itself on its egalitarian, informal approach to life, in which titles do not seem particularly important and ceremonies are often considered a waste of time. Americans often attempt to minimize status differences during negotiations: for example, they use first names to promote equality and informatity.[160]

The actions described by Adler can be quite disconcerting in European cultures, such as France, Germany, and England, where formality plays a greater role and titles are an important part of an individual's identity. Representatives from China, Japan, and Korea would also expect negotiations to be conducted on a more formal level than would someone from Australia, an informal culture. Koreans prefer titles to names, even among themselves, according to Lewis.[161]

PACE AND PATIENCE

The pace at which negotiations occur is culturally diverse and must be understood by anyone who is going to conduct business in an intercultural setting. In the United States, people grow up believing in the motto "He who hesitates is lost." Because of this, as Ferraro points out, "U.S. businesspeople have been criticized for their short-term view of doing business. Some feel that they should not waste time; they should get in there and get the contract signed and get on to other business."[162] Just reflect for a moment about what is actually being implied by the phrase "Just give me the bottom line." In many cultures, this desire to hasten the proceedings will have negative consequences. Hence, "Bringing the U.S. notion of time into an international negotiation will invariably result in either frustration or the eventual alienation of those with whom one is negotiating."[163]

The Western desire to move the negotiations along rapidly is not a popular approach for the Chinese and Japanese. There is even an Asian proverb that states, "With time and patience, the mulberry leaf becomes a silk gown." As Shi and Wright note, "Business negotiations in China require patience and tenacity."[164] With regard to Japanese negotiations, Nishiyama adds, "They become very cautious and are willing to take lots more time when it comes to an international business negotiation."[165] In cultures who want a slower-paced session, the first goal is to get to know the other party. The Japanese and the Chinese see entering into a commercial arrangement as much like entering into a marriage: it is something that should last for a long time and be beneficial to both parties. Accordingly, they want to take time to ensure that relations with the other organization will be both compatible and productive. To achieve this, negotiations will move slowly. Early meetings will focus more on the general background of the other organization and less on the specifics of the proposed business transaction.

In much of Latin America, business negotiations are also conducted at a much slower pace. There is even a proverb that states, "To a hurried demand, a leisurely reply." In Argentina and Mexico, interpersonal relationships are so important that a great deal of time is spent in building rapport before actually beginning business. This same concern with relationships and its link to pace and patience is found in India. Grihault observes, "As with everything in India, decisions are arrived at slowly. There is no point in trying to impose strict deadlines."[166]

EMOTIONAL DISPLAYS

Emotional displays by business negotiators can also have a bearing on the outcome of an international business transaction. For example, Western business representatives often characterize their Asian counterparts as "inscrutable" because they lack animation and make no outward expressions of emotion at the bargaining table. In the United States, it is normal and expected for people to use a wide range of nonverbal behaviors as a reflection of their feelings. The U.S. culture teaches that it is a natural part of social interactions to signal pleasure, disgust, anger, or any other emotion through nonverbal displays. In China, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines, however, outward demonstrations of emotions are felt to disturb harmony and are avoided whenever possible. In the following paragraph, O'Rourke illustrates this point as it applies to Japan:

> Since the Japanese value emotional sensitivity, they will not express emotion during business deals—self-control and deference are considered essential when responding to clients. For example, when disagreeing about a price, it is usual for someone who is Japanese to not argue or to remain silent when he feels he is right.[167]

In other cultures, such as Mexico and those in the Middle East, expressed emotions are expected and are seen as a means of emphasizing and reinforcing one's negotiating position.[168] Beamer and Varner explain the role of emotion for a Kuwaiti negotiator, and the potential for an adverse reaction, this way: "His love of verbal play and the importance of emotion in communication may make the Kuwaiti negotiator's wording of messages seem theatrical to a low-context communicator [e.g., American or Canadian]."[169] Morrison and his associates point out that Russian negotiators are also very emotional, and have been known to reinforce their positions by walking out of the meeting in an angry manner—only to eventually return to the table.[170]

DIRECT AND INDIRECT LANGUAGE

A negotiator's verbal communication style, particularly as it applies to the direct and indirect use of language, can also be the source of difficulties in international business. As we have noted elsewhere, representatives from collective cultures such as China, Japan, Korea, and Indonesia place considerable value on maintaining positive relations with their negotiation counterparts. To accomplish this, they rely on an indirect communication style. Sensitive issues with the potential to create conflict or cause discord are handled with care and normally are addressed in an indirect manner. The Chinese and Japanese are reluctant to give a direct negative reply, relying instead on vague terms, double negatives, and equivocal statements such as "That may be difficult," "We need to study that more," or "We will think about it." The Indonesians are so concerned with maintaining harmonious relations that they even have "twelve ways to say 'no.'"[171] Indirectness of this magnitude can be the source of consternation, confusion, and even misinterpretation to the Western negotiator, who is used to "getting to the point" and "not beating around the bush." For example, if a Japanese negotiator tells his United States counterpart that a request "will be very difficult," he is actually saying "no," and there will be no further consideration of the issue. However, the American business representative, accustomed to a definite "yes" or "no," is likely to interpret the statement as an indication that the request will remain under consideration, with a possible reply at a later date.

In most Middle Eastern cultures, you would find a more direct approach to the use of language than the one we just described with reference to Asian and Southeast Asian cultures. Forceful, dynamic, and exaggerated speech is part of the Arab negotiation style. Nydell summarizes this garrulous style of negotiation in the following paragraph:

> Participants in negotiations enjoy long, spirited discussions and are usually not in a hurry to conclude them. Speakers feel free to add to their points of argument by demonstrating their verbal cleverness, using their personal charm, applying personal pressure, and engaging in personal appeals for consideration of their point of view.[172]

EVIDENCE AND "TRUTH"

Cultures can differ greatly in their interpretation of what constitutes evidence and what is and is not "truth." To be a successful negotiator it is important to know these differences before you begin the bargaining process. Most Americans tend to rely on objective observations to establish facts. Truth is something that is verifiable. Statistics and empirical knowledge are of utmost importance. The desire to rely on facts is also part of the negotiation style employed by executives from Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Morrison offers the following advice for dealing with the English: "Provide as many objective facts as possible during your presentations and negotiations. To the English, scientific evidence is the truth."[173]

In Latin America, decisions are often based on subjective data and are usually supported by subjective feelings.[174] Many of these feeling are tied to a strong faith in the church, which is seen as the source of "truth." This belief in faith often results in a strong sense of fatalism among the people of Latin America. It is not impossible to find business executives who carry these religious convictions into their business practices. Proverbs such as "If your trouble has some remedy, why worry? And if it has no cure, again, why worry?" In short, Latin Americans are far more impressed with affect, fatalism, and emotion than they are with long strings of facts and logical dissertations. Businesspersons from Pacific Rim countries, although excellent negotiators, also rely on subjective interpretations as a source of evidence and truth. In Korea and China, the source of those subjective interpretations is usually the government. In most Arab countries, a combination of religious faith and the views of the rulers in power influence how decisions are made.

It should be clear that the criterion for defining truth is culture bound, and that the source of evidence and truth in one culture many not be the source of evidence and truth in another.[175] One manifestation of these differences is found in the business contract. Because Western cultures rely on objective data, legal definitions, and highly structured arguments, it only follows that their contracts reflect this point of view. Speaking of U.S. negotiators, Salacuse offers the following explanation: "For them [the United States] the contract is a definitive set of rights and duties that strictly binds the two sides, controls their behavior in the future, and determines who does what, when, and how. According to this view, the parties' deal is their contract."[176]

This rigid interpretation of the contract is also the case in Germany, where contracts are excruciatingly detailed, and signers are expected to adhere precisely to the various provisions. Germans, with their penchant for details, might find it frustrating when they come face-to-face with cultures from the Middle East and Asia. For example, in the Arab world, the word of the individual carries more weight than

the written word, and in some cases, insisting on a contract may be perceived as an insult.[177] From the Chinese perspective, the negotiations are designed to establish the parameters of the relationship, and the contract should serve only serve as an outline or guide.[178]

Developing Intercultural Negotiation Skills

We conclude this section on the negotiation process across cultures with a bit of advice on how to sharpen your communication skills when sitting at the bargaining table with people from cultures that differ from your own.

1. *Be prepared.* The overriding message embedded in our first suggestion asks you to learn all you can about the host culture before negotiations begin. This means learning about the behaviors that we have discussed in this chapter as they relate to formality, status, nonverbal actions, the use of language, and the like.
2. *Develop sensitivity to the use of time.* This admonition asks you to learn to adapt to a slower pace than you might be used to if you are from the U.S. dominant culture. It also advises being patient when dealing with cultures that use a different tempo than the one found in your culture.
3. *Listen carefully.* Part of concentrating on the proceedings is learning to remain comfortable with silence and realize that a lack of words is also a form of communication.
4. *Learn to tolerate ambiguity.* Many intercultural encounters are characterized by confusion and a search for meaning. All of this translates into a high degree of ambiguity—which is the quality of having more than one meaning. Therefore, we urge you to be tolerant of the unknown as you seek to make sense of what is new and often hard to characterize.
5. *Try to locate areas of agreement.* Since both sides in a negotiation want to gain something, it should be a simple matter to isolate areas of agreement. If both parties can be made to see these areas, everyone benefits.

Intercultural Conflict Management

Conflict is an inescapable aspect of all relationships. If managed improperly, conflict can lead to irreparable breakdowns—separation or divorce at the interpersonal level, war on a national scale, or lost opportunities in commercial endeavors. Two of the major components of this book—communication and culture—come into play when conflict occurs. With regard to conflict and communication, Pepper writes, "Communication is the dominant characteristic of conflict, for it serves as the vehicle of conflict transmission and the source of conflict management."[179] As you might expect, culture determines how conflict is viewed and managed. Cross-cultural business, marked by the participants' varying values, ideals, beliefs, and behaviors, offers a rich medium for discord. Let us now turn to that discord and recommend some ways to deal with conflict in the business setting. We will discuss (1) some Western approaches for dealing with conflict, (2) how other cultures cope with conflict, and (3) some specific conflict management skills that apply directly to intercultural communication.

Conflict: An American Perspective

Institutional disagreement in individualistic cultures, like the United States, has promoted quite different methods of managing conflict. Majority rule and unilateral decisions passed down vertically from higher authority, for example, are common managerial techniques in the United States. If company employees, or members of a negotiation team, disagree with a decision, they have a variety of options. They can openly express their dissent to upper management or to other members of the team as a means of reversing the decision. In the United States, "People are oriented toward personal goals of success and achievement; they find that relationships and group memberships get in the way of attaining these goals."[180] Because of this strong drive to assert individual self-interest, business matters, be they issues within the organization or cross-cultural transactions, often generate interpersonal conflict. According to Beamer and Varner, these conflicts within the business context usually arise from the following five areas of disagreement:

- Disagreement over tasks (what)
- Disagreement over processes (how)
- Disagreement over allocation of resources (with what)
- Disagreement over goals (why)
- Disagreement over power (how)[181]

In dealing with these general conflict areas, it appears that Americans have their own unique conflict style. There is a substantial body of literature that indicates that Americans have five basic approaches to dealing with conflict.[182] Knowing these approaches will help you appreciate how you might deal with conflict during your business transactions with people from different cultures. Later we will offer a cross-cultural comparison of these approaches so that you might be able to adapt to intercultural discord when it arises.

AVOIDANCE

Also referred to as denial or withdrawal, *avoidance* is a strategy based on the assumption that a conflict will disappear if it is just ignored.[183] Within an organization, the person is apt to say, "You decide and just leave me out of it." In some ways, this is the easiest way of coping with conflict. Avoiding conflict can be either mental (being silent or not taking part in the interaction) or physical (removing yourself from the environment of the conflict). Often when avoidance is the method used, the situation that created the conflict seems to intensify as the parties mull over what happened. While avoidance is occasionally used by Americans, it is not a popular approach to conflict in the United States. Most Americans do not like unresolved problems and have a need to "have their say" and "clear the air." Therefore, in the United States and other individualistic cultures, withdrawal "is rarely a satisfactory, long-term solution."[184] As we shall see later in the chapter, there are many cultures, particularly those that

CONSIDER THIS

As you read about the methods of dealing with conflict found in the United States, ask yourself which of these methods best describes the approach you have observed in the groups you have been part of.

stress harmony as a major value, in which avoidance is a common tool for resolving conflict.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is a form of dealing with conflict that is closely related to avoidance; the difference is that in *accommodation*, one attempts to satisfy the other person's desires. According to Schmidt and his colleagues, "People who seek connections, have high affiliative needs, and genuinely are concerned about relational associations often prefer an accommodating or yielding approach to conflict."[185] On many occasions, these actions "can precipitate an uneasy, tense relational state characterized by a weak, self-sacrificing approach and even nervous laughter."[186] An attitude that tries to signal, "I do not care what you do" has some other built-in weaknesses. People at the negotiation table, be they associates or on the "other side," often resent this approach because poor outcomes may result if only one side's perspective is discussed.

COMPETITION

As you learned in Chapter 5 when we talked about values, *competition* is a fundamental American value. Hence, it is not surprising that even in the business arena competition is a characteristic of U.S. American conflict management. Beamer and Varner discuss the problems of the "win at all cost" approach when it is acted out with collective cultures that stress group harmony over individual success:

> Competing is openly encouraged in individualistic cultures. Salespeople are challenged to outdo each other, for example. The salesperson of the year is singled out for an award in many companies. But collective cultures do not encourage open competition. Individual goals are not to be placed above the goals of the group.[187]

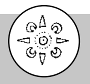
You should be able to visualize the problems that can occur when conflicts arise between these two very different values concerning competition. In many cross-cultural negotiations, for example, you will have members of an individualistic culture wanting to win the argument at any cost, while the representatives from the collective culture, who also want the negotiation session to benefit them, employ a methodology for resolving the conflict that does not portray the parties as combatants.

As Morreale, Spitzberg, and Barge note, "Compromise is about finding the middle course, with each party agreeing to make concessions to the others."[188] In this approach, people usually have to give something up or make a "trade" in order to resolve the conflict. The strategy is based on the simple belief that it is better to get *something* instead of *nothing*. In the business context, compromise is an approach that is often characterized by clichés such as "let's split the difference" or "something is better than nothing." As an aside, we would advise against using those trite expressions in the intercultural business meeting since, as you learned in our discussion of idioms in Chapter 6, such expressions are often culture bound.

COLLABORATION

At the core of *collaboration* is the idea that all parties work together to resolve conflict. DeFleur and her colleagues describe collaboration as an attempt to maintain a productive relationship that will resolve the disagreements while working collaboratively toward

a common goal.[189] By employing creative devices, everyone's goals and needs can be satisfied. Because the conflict is viewed in a positive manner, collaboration is the most sought-after method of settling conflicts. It is also a popular method in North America in that the parties get to keep their goals in place while still cooperating with each other.

REMEMBER THIS 

Cultures perceive and deal with conflict in a variety of ways. Some seek to avoid it, while others believe it is part of normal interpersonal interaction.

Conflict: An Intercultural Perspective

Although conflict is a part of nearly every aspect of the business setting, each culture's way of perceiving and dealing with conflict reflects its value system. As we mentioned earlier in this section, in the United States there is often a belief that conflict is part of competition and "self-expression" and therefore can be useful. This perception of conflict is also seen in other cultures. In the Middle East, people perceive conflict as a natural way of life. People are expected to have intense feelings on many issues and to express those feelings in an animated and confrontational manner. Think for a moment of what is being said in the humorous Jewish proverb that venerates disputes and conflict by noting, "Where there are two Jews there are three opinions." Greeks also have an expressive approach to conflict and are proud of their long tradition of argumentation and debate. As Broome points out, for Greeks, "challenges, insults, and attacks are, within appropriate limits, almost synonymous with conversing."[190] Let us offer a few examples that underscore the point that culture and conflict are linked.

In general, as we noted elsewhere, collectivistic cultures have an aversion to open, direct conflict, which is seen as a threat to organizational accord and stability and to the relationships among group members. For the Japanese, conflict is seen as interpersonally embarrassing and distressing since it potentially disrupts social harmony.[191] They believe disputes should be resolved privately and prefer "reaching an agreement without confrontation, especially in the case of parties engaged in a long term relationship."[192] To make sure conflict is not part of the environment, most Japanese companies use programs to socialize employees so they view the organization as part of "their professional and personal fulfillment."[193] Because the individual's identity is derived in part from the organization, there is little incentive to engage in disruptive organizational activities. Japanese companies also incorporate small-group discussions and use trusted intermediaries to help preclude or resolve conflicts. Criticism, a potent source of disagreement and conflict, is expressed indirectly, in passive, accommodating styles. Since conflict carries the potential loss of face, the Japanese are likely to remain silent or use nonverbal behaviors to express disapproval—even at business meetings with members of other cultures.

A view of conflict much like the Japanese one is found among the Chinese, to whom social harmony is also important.[194] While the Chinese are skilled negotiators, and at times difficult to bargain with, they nevertheless try to avoid direct conflict, an attitude toward conflict that is directly linked to the Confucian philosophy we discussed in Chapter 3. That is to say, the Chinese feel more comfortable using avoidance or compromise tactics when faced with a conflict situation. This attitude toward anger

and conflict is expressed in the Chinese proverb "Do not use a hatchet to remove a fly from your friend's forehead." According to Ting-Toomey and Chung, this view of conflict even carries over to Asian Americans. They point out that "Asian Americans who adhere to traditional Asian values tend to use the avoiding and obliging conflict style to deal with a conflict at hand. They sometimes also use 'silence' as a powerful, high-context conflict style."[195]

Latino cultures also perceive and deal with conflict in a manner that reflects many of their cultural values. Because Brazilian culture values friendships in both business and social interactions, conflict is seen as something to be avoided. In the business context, for example, protocol requires that people feel at ease with each other,[196] and interpersonal conflicts will disturb that comfort. Mexicans are another group that does not enjoy direct confrontation.[197] For them, "an avoidance conflict style is sometimes preferred over a head-on confrontation style in dealing with minor or midrange conflict issues."[198] Some European and Scandinavian cultures also deal with conflict in ways that are dissimilar to the conflict style found in the United States. While interpersonal harmony is not the driving force, Germans do not engage in direct face-to-face conflict. Nees summarizes the German approach in the following manner: "Conflict is generally avoided, not by emphasizing harmony in personal relationships or by smoothing over differences of opinion, but rather by maintaining formality and social distance."[199] For the French, losing control and outwardly engaging in social conflict is "a sign of weakness."[200] The Swedes also try to avoid conflict in the business setting. Morrison, Conaway, and Douress summarize this point as follows: "Swedes believe that an ideal proposition, once crafted to the benefit of all parties, will leave little room for further negotiation. A win-win situation is always sought in negotiations."[201] Regardless of the motivation used to justify or avoid conflict, one thing should be clear by now—not all cultures deal with conflict in the same manner.

Managing Intercultural Conflict

As we just noted, perceiving and handling conflict is rooted in culture. However, some skills for responding to conflict can be employed regardless of the culture you are interacting with. Let us now examine some of those skills.

IDENTIFY THE CONTENTIOUS ISSUES

Whether the conflict is over personalities, specific points in a contract, or a verbal misunderstanding, you need to begin by discovering what is at the core of the disagreement. It does not make sense to argue over a particular point only to discover later that your counterpart did not even understand the central point of the controversy. This desire to isolate the disagreement shows your willingness to negotiate in "good faith." It also relieves some of the anxiety within the negotiation meeting. Once you have clarified the issues, all parties can begin to focus on solutions to the controversy.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND

Asking you to "keep an open mind" while engaged in a conflict is easier for us to suggest than for you to carry out. When we speak of trying to keep an open mind, we are not talking about giving blind allegiance to the other person's arguments and abandoning

your principles. Rather, we are pointing out the advantages of trying to see things from another point of view and remaining open to the other person's position. This notion of being receptive before passing judgment is expressed by Roy and Oludaja when they advise, "Approach the conflict with openness. Recognize that there is much to learn about the other participants as persons and the worldviews that shaped their positions."[202]

DO NOT RUSH

Because so many business transactions are expensive (international air travel, hotels, etc.) it is easy to feel that you must rush to accomplish your objective. We advise, however, that you not rush to resolve a conflict when interacting with members of a collective culture. In short, you must learn to slow down the entire negotiation process when conflict arises. As Ting-Toomey notes, "Be sensitive to the importance of quiet, mindful observation."[203] Ting-Toomey also offers the following non-Western advice for responding to conflict: "Use deep-level silence, deliberate pauses, and patient conversational turn-taking in the conflict interaction process with collectivists."[204]

KEEP THE CONFLICT CENTERED ON IDEAS, NOT PEOPLE

Regardless of the culture, no one likes feeling threatened or being placed in an uncomfortable position. Hence, it is important to separate the propositions from the people. This keeps the negotiations focused on solving the problem that created the conflict instead of having the parties defend their egos. You will recall that when we discussed "saving face" and "facework" in Chapter 5 we noted how, particularly in collective cultures, people attempt to preserve their image. If you attack another person, their "face" is threatened and can be diminished. Therefore, to avoid having a person "lose face" you need to keep the focus on the content of the conflict and not on the individual.

DEVELOP TECHNIQUES FOR AVOIDING CONFLICT

There are number of techniques you can employ that might help resolve the conflict before it reaches the point of being irresolvable. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Learning to use collective pronouns can help defuse conflict. Although at times you may have to refer to people by name, when you are with a group of people, try to develop the practice of using group pronouns as a way of centering on content instead of people. Notice how words such as "we" and "our" focus the conversation on everyone instead of on one person, as is the case with "I," "me," and "you."

2. Repeat the other person's comments as objectively as possible so that you can determine if you actually heard what they meant to communicate. Often something is read into a comment that was not actually intended by the sender of the message.

3. Try to state as many points of agreement as possible. Often the areas of agreement can outweigh the differences, and therefore conflict can be avoided. This can be done by using something as simple as a sentence that states, "We all can agree that this contract would be beneficial to both our companies."

We conclude this chapter by urging you to be aware of the important influence culture has on the conduct of business—both internationally and domestically. Part of that awareness is realizing that you may be unfamiliar with significant aspects of the business context as it relates to culture. Therefore, we implore you to heed the words of President John F. Kennedy: "The greater our knowledge increases, the greater our ignorance unfolds."

SUMMARY

- The communication context is the cultural environment in which communication occurs.
- Culturally diverse rules specify how communication is to take place by prescribing the appropriate behaviors for given contexts.
- Rules concerning informality, formality, assertiveness, interpersonal harmony, and social status can be found in every communication setting.
- Intercultural communication takes place both in international and domestic business settings.
- In the cross-cultural business setting, protocol influences how contacts are made, greeting behavior, personal appearance, gift giving, and conversational taboos.
- Management styles differ across cultures. These styles influence leadership and decision making.
- Negotiation styles differ across cultures. These differences are revealed in how cultures view the process of negotiations, the selection of negotiators, business ethics, and participation practices.
- Intercultural conflict is part of many intercultural business contacts.
- In North America, strategies for managing conflict include avoidance, accommodation, competition, compromise, and collaboration. These strategies are often different from the methods of managing conflict found in other cultures.
- Conflict can frequently be reduced by identifying the cause, keeping an open mind, slowing down, and focusing on ideas rather than people.
- Rapidly increasing cultural diversity in the U.S. business community will require greater intercultural understanding and skills.

ACTIVITIES

1. In newspapers or magazines, find three articles that evidence increased globalization in the marketplace. In small groups, discuss the question, "Is economic globalization good or bad?"
2. Select a controversial topic such as (1) the United States should adopt English as the official language, (2) affirmative action should be abolished, or (3) the United States should take stronger measures

against illegal immigrants. Divide the class into small groups of four or five. Have the members of each group work to arrive at a true consensus decision for each question. Afterward, discuss the difficulties encountered in the group consensus process.

3. In small groups, list the different problems that can arise in a multinational workforce, either international or domestic. Discuss some measures that might help resolve or lessen these problems.
4. Select a newspaper or magazine article that discusses a negotiation session between members of two or more cultures. Analyze the situation by isolating why the negotiation was successful or why it failed. Try to use the concepts from this chapter.
5. Divide the class into five groups. Assign each group one of the conflict styles found in the United States (avoiding, competing, compromising, accommodating, collaborating). Ask the groups to role-play using one of the five styles to cope with a conflict within the group. The conflict can focus on a business topic such as pricing, delivery, etc.
6. Form three groups and have each group select one of the following cultures: China, Japan, or Mexico. Within each group, discuss how a person would prepare to negotiate a business contract that his or her company wanted when the other representatives were from the other two groups. In short, what would you need to know to accomplish your purpose (getting a contract signed)?

DISCUSSION IDEAS

1. What is meant by the phrase "communication is rule governed"? What are some of the rules that govern your communication in the classroom? A business meeting you might attend? An appointment in a doctor's office? How might these rules differ in another country?
2. What are some of the established communication protocols that govern U.S. business interactions? How might some of these protocols create a problem when dealing with business representatives from other cultures?
3. What are some typical aspects of the U.S. negotiation style that might create problems in a negotiation session with a collective culture client? What recommendations would you offer for eliminating or dealing with these problem areas?
4. Because many managers are now dealing with a variety of cultures, they must learn to adapt to cultural differences in the workplace and at the bargaining table. What cultural differences, be they in values or behavior, are the most important for the intercultural manager to learn about?
5. Does the impact of electronic technology on global economies increase or decrease the need for people to be trained in intercultural communication? Explain your answer.

CHAPTER 9

Cultural Influences on Context: The Educational Setting

Human history is increasingly a race between intercultural education and disaster. If education is not intercultural, it is probably not education, but rather the inculcation of nationalist or religious fundamentalism.

DAVID COULBY

Our young must be taught that racial peculiarities do exist, but that beneath the skin, beyond the differing features and into the true heart of being, fundamentally we are more alike, my friend, than we are unalike.

MAYA ANGELOU

Although much of the material found in this chapter will primarily be of use to future teachers, we believe that many of you will profit from this knowledge regardless of your future employment. If, for instance, you work in the health care professions, you could find yourself "teaching" culturally diverse clients about appropriate prenatal care. Or, in the business world, you might become a corporate trainer working with culturally diverse clients. In each instance, you will profit from knowledge about cultural diversity in educational processes.

Culture is inseparably linked to education; people raised in diverse cultures are educated in accordance with the perceived needs of their cultures. Thus, while people may be biologically alike, they grow up to be socially different because of their cultural experiences. Schools represent one of the most important of those experiences. Schools also provide a context in which both the socialization process and the learning process occur. Due to the profound impact that schools have on intercultural interaction, education is the main focus of this chapter.

Because the classroom is such an important intercultural setting, we believe it is worth study for several reasons. First, you can gain valuable insight into a culture by studying its perceptions of and approaches to education. The importance of education to the Chinese, for example, is expressed in the simple proverb "learning is a treasure that follows its owner everywhere." By contrast, many Latinos perceive education and schooling as being closely related yet different. For numerous Latinos, education is

perceived to be more than formal schooling; it is recognized as an avenue to economic reward. As Tapia points out, Latinos believe that "education also has a moral evaluative connotation such that a well-educated child has respect for elders and authority, has good manners, and is considerate of other people."[1]

Second, in most instances, the traditional goals of schools have been bound to universalistic intellectual or social functions associated with the dominant society. The most explicit function to which schools are directed is the inculcation of the broadly shared knowledge and skills deemed necessary for individual participation in the larger society.[2] This is true whether you are considering a country as large and complex as the United States or a small tribal society living in the midst of a South American rain forest. For instance, the basis of survival in the United States, as presented in its educational system, is to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to secure employment that, in turn, will provide sufficient income to live comfortably. In the forest, survival skills may include how to set an animal snare, how to fashion a functional bow and arrow, how to make a fire, or how to recognize which plants are edible and which are toxic. By discovering how learning and knowledge differ from one culture to another, you can gain valuable insights into the backgrounds of people from other cultures.

A third reason you should know about the influence culture has on education is to become aware of the informal knowledge of a culture. Saville-Troike emphasizes this point by indicating that children are supposed to internalize the basic values and beliefs of their culture. They learn the rules of behavior that are considered appropriate for their role in the community and begin to be socialized into that community.[3] In school, children learn the rules of correct conduct, a hierarchy of cultural values, how to treat and interact with one another, gender-role expectations, respect, and all of the other informal matters of culture.

Fourth, education in all of its forms is one of the largest professions in the United States. Consequently, many of you may encounter members of diverse cultures functioning as teachers in traditional classrooms, conducting business training seminars, or perhaps providing parenting classes to new parents. An awareness of the cultural diversity now inherent in education can help your understanding of specific communication behaviors as they are manifested in multicultural classrooms. Finally, as parents or potential parents, it behooves you to understand the dynamics of culturally diverse classrooms.

You should recognize that, however they may differ in size and symbolic and operational detail, most cultural communities are essentially identical with respect to many of the most rudimentary elements of social structure, needs, and desires.[4] In essence, every culture teaches with the same goals: perpetuating the culture and passing its history and traditions from generation to generation. A culture's system of formal and informal education seeks to meet the perceived needs of its society. Thus, in every culture, schools serve a multitude of functions. First, they help fashion the individual. As children grow, both what they learn and the ways in which they learn influence their thinking and behavior. From a child's point of view, education provides a way to certainty. It offers every child a set of guidelines and values for living a proper life. As the English social philosopher Herbert Spencer wrote, "Education has for its object the formation of character." Henry expands this notion by expressing the idea that children are shaped by their schools as they become aware of what they must know to lead productive, successful, and satisfying lives.[5]

Education is universally influenced by culture. This influence is especially important in multicultural societies because of cultural and co-cultural diversity. Because of this

REMEMBER THIS

Although education is universally influenced by culture, this influence is especially important in multicultural societies because of the cultural diversity inherent in the educational process.

connection, we believe that although good communication skills are important at every level of society, in the classroom, communication (both verbal and nonverbal) is especially critical because it is the vehicle through which teachers and students interact and make judgments about each other. Because it is linked to teachers' ability to convey instructional and behavioral objectives and subject matter clearly, as well as to students' ability to comprehend, classroom communication is extremely important. Additionally, students must use communication skills to demonstrate whether they have mastered the subject matter.[6]

A first requisite to achieving competent multicultural communicative capabilities in the educational setting is to understand the dynamics associated with culture and education. To this end, we will examine (1) the changing dynamics of the educational system, (2) culturally diverse educational systems, (3) multicultural education, (4) the influence of language diversity in multicultural education, and (5) the development of multicultural teacher competence.

Changing Educational Dynamics

According to *The Condition of Education, 2008*, a report by the National Center for Education Statistics, enrollment in America's public schools is rising to an all-time high, and the nation's student body is becoming increasingly diverse. Students from diverse co-cultures make up 43 percent of the public school enrollment, and Latino students alone account for one in five public school students. In addition, 20 percent of school-age children speak a language other than English at home, and about 5 percent speak English with difficulty.[7] In order to accommodate this diverse population of students, the way in which education progresses must change to adapt to the needs of all students.

Change is difficult. Sometimes welcomed, but frequently not, it represents transitions for peoples and societies alike. Change, however, compels reexamination—looking at something as if for the first time. These refreshed perceptions can prompt recognition of new opportunities. Alternatively, these reflections may give us feelings of foreboding about the future. Not fitful or intermittent, these feelings are continuous and encompass societies, institutions, and the people who compose them. These are the images that spark reform.[8] Education has become a cross-cultural encounter involving a multiplicity of ethnicities, worldviews, and life and learning styles.[9]

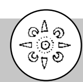
Culturally Diverse Educational Systems

We believe the Chinese philosopher Tehyi Hsieh was correct when he wrote, "The schools of the country are its future in miniature." Consequently, it is important that you understand and appreciate these "schools," whether they are located in your community or elsewhere.

Robert Fonseca

Classrooms throughout the world differ in everything from what curriculum is taught to how that curriculum is taught.

As you might suspect, cultures with formal educational systems tend to teach many of the same things: literacy, mathematics, science, history, religion, and so forth. Yet, significant differences may be found in both what and how cultures teach. Because these differences define the form of education within cultures, we will examine some of them.

REMEMBER THIS 

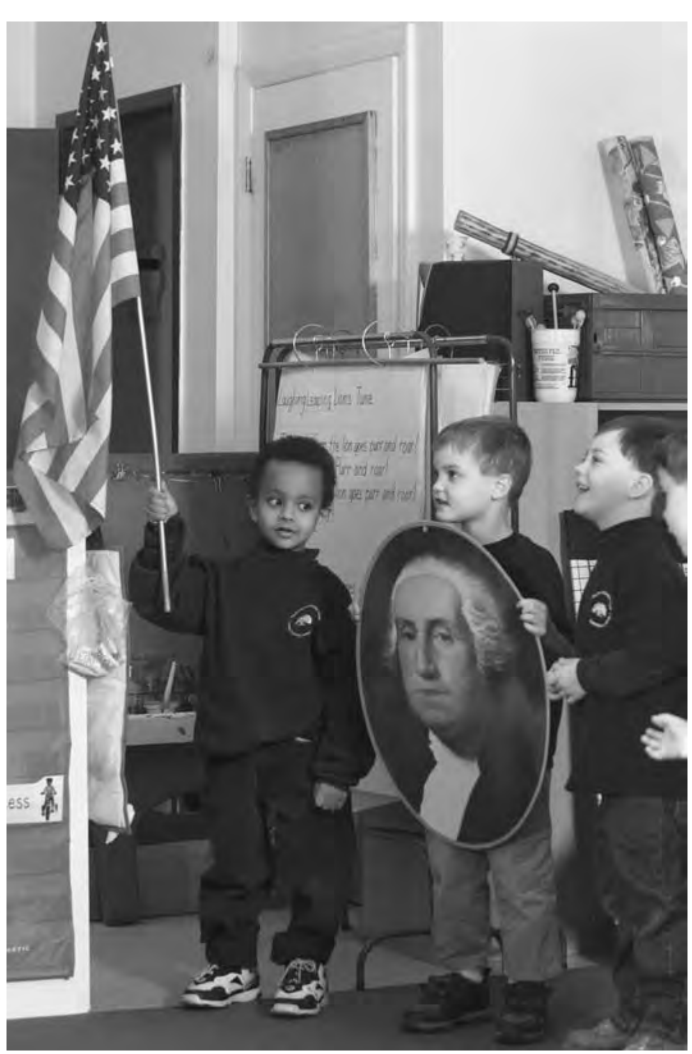
1. *Enrollment in U.S. schools is rising to an all-time high.*
2. *The U.S. student body is becoming increasingly diverse.*
3. *Students from diverse co-cultures make up 43 percent of U.S. public school enrollment.*
4. *Twenty percent of U.S. public school students speak a language other than English at home.*

What and How Cultures Teach

An ancient Chinese proverb tells us that "by nature all men are alike, but by education widely different." This difference is mainly due to the influence of culture on the world's educational systems. In earlier chapters, we emphasized that cultures impress

upon each generation their worldviews, values, and perceptual filters. Yet, as writer Paul Goodman observed, "There is only one curriculum, no matter what the method of education: what is basic and universal in human experience and practice, the underlying structure of culture." What is taught in a culture, therefore, is crucial to the maintenance and perpetuation of that culture and usually is a major responsibility of the formal educational systems within a culture.

The teaching of history is common in all cultures, but each culture emphasizes its own history. This natural tendency to emphasize one's past is succinctly expressed by the scholar and diplomat Abba Eban, who noted, "A nation writes its history in the image of its ideal." In the United States, that ideal involves events such as the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the American Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and the many victories America has achieved on the battlefield. In Mexico, however, the focus might be on the cultural heritage of the pre-Columbian Indians and the Mexican Revolution. The teaching of language is also common in all cultures, but, as with history, cultures first teach their own language. When schoolchildren are taught a



Frank Siteman/PhotoEdit

Schools in all cultures, consciously or unconsciously, impart ethnocentrism.

culture's history and language, their society is passing on its culture and reinforcing its beliefs and values—as well as its prejudices.

Every culture, whether consciously or unconsciously, tends to glorify its historical, scientific, economic, and artistic accomplishments, frequently minimizing the achievements of other cultures. In this way, schools in all cultures impart ethnocentrism. For instance, the next time you look at a world map, notice that the United States is probably located in the center—unless, of course, you are looking at a map designed by an African, Chinese, or Russian cartographer. Many students in the United States, if asked to identify the great books of the world, would produce a list of texts authored mainly by dead, Western, white, male authors. This subtle ethnocentrism, which reinforces a culture's values, beliefs, and prejudices, is not a uniquely American phenomenon. Studying only the Koran in Pakistani schools, or only the Torah in Israeli classrooms, while disregarding other religious texts, is also a quiet form of ethnocentrism. Since what is taught in educational systems varies between cultures, you should not be surprised to find there are also differences in how students and teachers participate in the learning process. Being familiar with what a culture teaches can give you insight into that culture. Knowing how teaching occurs within a culture is just as important, because it (1) provides knowledge about the nature of the culture, (2) helps you understand interpersonal relationships among students and between students and teachers, and (3) helps you understand the importance a culture places on education.

The formal education process prevalent in a culture is tied directly to the values and characteristics of that culture. It is common in some cultures for teachers to talk or lecture a great deal of the time, whereas in other cultures students do most of the talking. Silence and minimal vocal participation are characteristic of some classrooms, whereas others tend to be noisy and active. In many cultures, students listen to and then write down what their teacher has said rather than using individual textbooks. This is particularly true in countries where the economy may rule out the luxury of individual textbooks.

In addition, as you shall see, the authority vested in the teacher differs from culture to culture. Even nonverbal aspects such as space, distance, time, and dress code are cultural variables that are reflected in classroom behavior. We will pause for a moment to look at some culturally diverse international and domestic educational systems in order to give you a glimpse of each one's uniqueness.

What a culture emphasizes in its curriculum can provide some insight into the character of that culture. As you learned earlier, the Chinese culture is distinctively collectivist; hence, Chinese education emphasizes the goals of the group or society, fosters in-group belonging, demands cooperation and interdependence, stresses moral behavior, and pursues harmony. As Lu points out, Confucian tradition holds that teachers should not only teach knowledge but also cultivate a strong sense of moral and righteous conduct in their students. Chinese teachers, consequently, hold a position of moral authority and instruct students in the culture's moral rules of conduct.[10]

Education in China is inherently competitive. Advancement through the educational system is based upon prior success as measured by rigorous testing. Test scores can determine not only one's major, but also the schools one can attend. Admission to university-level education is based on the *gaokao*, the Chinese version of the American SAT. However, while the SAT may take a few hours to complete, the *gaokao* lasts two days, covers everything students have studied since kindergarten, and has the power to determine one's entire professional trajectory.[11]

Group solidarity and conformity are important goals in many classrooms.

Edwin McDaniel

The Japanese educational system is guided by a centralized ministry of education that enforces a high degree of uniformity and a standardized school curriculum.[12] According to Nemoto, this ministry sets national curriculum standards for all public schools, from kindergarten to high school, to ensure a standardized education. Using the ministry's guidelines, each school prepares its own curriculum, "while taking into account its own circumstances and the situation of the community.[13]

The Japanese are very group oriented, a cultural value aptly expressed in a Japanese proverb that states, "A single arrow is easily broken, but not a bunch." For the Japanese, social harmony is an essential element of their culture, and they insist that a school education include character formation and moral education.[14] Proper social behavior, according to White, is something that all students can and must attain and is paramount in the Japanese educational system.[15] To this end, the Japanese curriculum includes instruction in cooperation, harmony, proper social decorum, and interdependence.

Reading, writing, and mathematics are emphasized in the Japanese curriculum, but unlike in the United States, much less attention is paid to oral communication. A lack of effective oral communication skills frequently causes Japanese students serious problems if they attend school in the United States, where oral proficiency is encouraged and expected. Although this problem has been recognized, effective long-term remedies have not yet been instituted.

One of the most important teaching methods in Japanese schools is rote memorization of factual knowledge. Classroom instructors spend a lot of their time giving lectures and writing on blackboards. Students copy down what teachers say and memorize facts and figures. In a geography class, for instance, students memorize the names and capital cities of all major countries and the locations of large rivers, mountains, islands, and oceans. In a world history class, students might memorize important facts about the

United States, such as the dates of the Civil War, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Marshall Plan, but they do not analyze the causes or social implications of these events.[16]

Korean educational processes are similar to those found in China and Japan. Teachers assume leadership roles in the areas of social values, civic awareness and duty, and academic preparation. Parents hold teachers responsible for disciplining their children, and children are often told that their teachers will be notified if they misbehave at home.

For most subjects, Korean students remain in their homerooms and teachers rotate among classes. This permits the homeroom teacher to be a social and academic counselor and deal with discipline problems. Group solidarity and conformity are important goals of the Korean educational system. Having students take all of their classes together and wear uniforms leads to the achievement of these goals. These goals are further realized through rules governing appearance, such as hair length for boys and a makeup ban for girls, which are strictly enforced even when students are on the way to and from school.

In his analysis of the new post–Soviet Union Russia, Segal reports that schools have become rigorous institutions in which students learn how to participate in a competitive global market economy. Russian universities now define students in economic terms.[17] Russian students study mathematics every year from the first to the eleventh grade and take yearly science classes beginning in the seventh grade. By graduation, they have taken five years of biology, five years of physics, and four years of chemistry. The Russian school day begins at 8:30 a.m., and all classes are forty minutes long. Primary students have four or five classes a day and finish by early afternoon, while middle- and upper-level students stay later and attend six or seven classes. Students may not choose what subjects to study, except that they may select the foreign language they want to learn.[18]

In addition to following a standard American academic curriculum enriched by Arabic and religious classes, Muslim schools in the United States seek to instill traditional Islamic moral values, particularly those related to the separation of genders. At the Al Iman School in Queens, New York, students sit in rows and are separated by gender. Girls wear headscarves, and all children are uniformed, with girls wearing shapeless robes and boys wearing blue sweaters and gray trousers. Students are punished for bringing toys, comics, cosmetics, or jewelry to school. In addition, the school forbids wearing nail polish and "pursuing acts of romanticism," such as flirting with other students. Muslim schools, however, have adapted to the questioning nature of U.S. culture, and students have become prone to ask questions of their teachers and seem unwilling to accept such answers as "Because [the Koran] says so."[19]

In many African nations, the traditional educational goals are twofold. The first is social, and seeks to develop the child's character,[20] inculcate respect for elders and those in positions of authority, develop a sense of belonging, encourage active participation in family and community affairs, and help the child understand, appreciate, and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large. The second set of goals is more practical, and includes the development of intellectual skills, the development of a child's latent physical skills, the acquisition of specific vocational training, and the development of a healthy attitude toward honest labor.[21]

Proverbs are a prominent attribute of virtually all traditional African cultures because they play important educational and communicative roles. As you have seen throughout this book, the basic idea underlying proverbs is that they provide succinct, easily

remembered summaries of important ideas and experiences that are part of the shared cultural knowledge of the community.[22] Traditional educational practices involve memorizing many proverbs and learning their meanings and applications in social life. For example, how people should be treated is expressed in the proverbs "a kindness is reciprocated" and "the stomach of a traveler is small." Faithfulness and unfaithfulness might be expressed by "he cries with one eye" or "a crime is always denied." "The harshness of young people is repaid" and "the one offended never forgets; it is the offender who forgets" express concepts of friendship and enmity. Finally, the passage of time and aging are expressed in the sayings "old age does not announce itself" and "death has no modesty."[23]

In Spain, students are taught the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. In addition to these basics, Spanish students are also instructed in "formative" skills, "national spirit," and "complementary" skills. Formative skills are taught through religious education. Culture is a matter of great pride in Spain, and this pride is partially instilled by including "national spirit" as part of the educational process.

Spanish classrooms are characterized by a lack of competition. Unlike U.S. students, Spanish students do not compete for grades. Ideas and information are shared and are not treated as if they were the domain of one person. Classrooms truly reflect the Spanish proverb that states, "Three helping one another will do as much as six men singly." Because Spanish schools do not emphasize extracurricular activities, students tend to spend about twice as much time pursuing academic subjects as do U.S. students. As we noted in Chapter 5, where we discussed cultural values, the Spanish culture has a high level of uncertainty. Spanish classrooms, therefore, tend to be very structured, aiming to reduce that uncertainty and make students feel comfortable. To this end, teachers outline specific objectives for the day, enforce rules of conduct, and explain assignments clearly. The Spanish culture considers teachers to be experts; students are expected to agree with their teachers at all times or be viewed as disloyal. On examinations and written assignments, students are expected to repeat the teacher's ideas rather than provide their own thoughts or creative answers. Reward for student achievement is not immediate in the Spanish classroom. Students must complete their homework assignments and other projects on time, but they must wait until their final examination to receive a grade. Student evaluations do not emphasize how well the student did, but rather what needs to be improved.

Mexican schools present yet another insight into what a culture deems essential in the education of its people. Being familiar with Mexican educational practices is especially important to U.S. educators because large numbers of students from Mexico now attend school in the United States.

Mexican education practices differ in a number of ways from the educational systems found in the United States, China, Japan, Korea, and other countries. Mexico's educational system mandates completion of the twelfth grade, although the severe economic climate in parts of Mexico often precludes students from achieving this goal. While some Mexican classrooms appear similar to those in North America, few rural schools have the luxury of individual textbooks, video equipment, or computers. According to Grossman, rural schoolteachers frequently have to read from a single textbook while students recite after them or write down what is said in a notebook.[24]

As is true of most educational systems, history is emphasized in Mexican schools. But students are also taught Mexican cultural values, the arts, trades, and vocational skills. Mexican children grow up within cooperative environments that emphasize strong family ties, and schools reinforce this primary value by emphasizing cooperation over

competition. So strong is the value of cooperation that "the Mexican student will tend to look down on overt competition because of his or her fear of arousing the envy and destructiveness of peers."[25]

Numerous cultural values are also reinforced in the Mexican classroom. For example, Ting-Toomey believes that because Mexico is a collective culture, it tends to deal with conflict in a manner that reflects consideration of the feelings of others.[26] Collectivism is also revealed by the high level of cooperation in the Mexican classroom. It is not uncommon, according to Grossman, for Mexican students to share their homework or answers with others in order to display group solidarity, generosity, and helpfulness.[27] In the Mexican classroom, group interaction is the primary learning mode, yet there are times when the teacher will talk and students will sit quietly at their desks. Because Mexican culture values conversation, when students are engaged in group interaction, they will participate enthusiastically in classroom discussion. Since it is not considered impolite for more than one person to speak at the same time, multiple conversations may occur simultaneously. Teachers move about the classroom during these periods, interact at very close distances, and offer pats on the back or touches as a means of praise and positive reinforcement.

Finally, as we have already indicated, Mexicans value the present. As the famous Latino writer Octavio Paz said, "Reality is a staircase going neither up nor down; we don't move, today is today, always is today." This focus on the present pervades the Mexican classroom. As Headden suggests, rather than moving from one subject area to another simply because the clock tells them it is time to change topics, Mexican students work at a relaxed pace even if it means taking longer to finish. Mexican students are concerned with doing a job well, regardless of the amount of time required.[28]

There are numerous American Indian nations and tribes located throughout the United States. A look at the Navajo approach to education will give you a glimpse of education within the American Indian community. The education of Navajo children is concerned with the fundamental aspects of their worldview and beliefs. Bennett, in his examination of Navajo education, has found that that nation's deep cultural values are included as a major facet of its educational system. For the Navajo, life is conceived of as a whole rather than being segmented into social, economic, and political spheres. Accordingly, in addition to reading, writing, history, science, and mathematics, Navajo children are taught that life is a continuous quest for harmony and that the universe is orderly but full of dangers. They are also taught that evil and good are complementary, and both are inherent in all things, meaning that

CONSIDER THIS

Internationally, schools differ in both how and what they teach.

1. *What are the major similarities and differences between how education occurs in Japan and how it occurs in the United States?*
2. *By the time Russian students graduate from high school, they have studied five years of physics, five years of biology, and four years of chemistry. What differences do you see between Russian and U.S. public schools? Is one system better than the other one?*
3. *How do proverbs fit in with traditional African education? What functions do they perform?*
4. *What are the major characteristics of traditional Navajo education?*

human nature is neither inherently good nor inherently evil. Finally, they are instructed that everything is composed of both male and female, which belong together and complete each other; and that the future is uncertain.[29]

From our discussion of these representative educational systems, it should be clear to you that culture significantly affects the learning process. In many cases—particularly within industrialized cultures—there are close similarities among cultures in the teaching of science and mathematics. However, in other areas, such as history, philosophy, and social values, there are differences, frequently extensive ones, in what is taught because each culture teaches its specific history and traditions. Cultures also differ in how they teach—lecture versus interaction, cooperation versus competition, silence versus noise, active versus passive, textbook versus recitation, and the like. Even the status of teachers and the esteem in which education is held are reflections of a culture's values.

We now turn to the complex issues of providing multicultural education in the United States and the challenges inherent in simultaneously satisfying the educational needs of many culturally diverse students who are trying to learn in the same classroom.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education in the United States, says Bennett, is an approach to teaching and learning that is based upon democratic values and beliefs and affirms cultural pluralism in an interdependent society. In a pluralistic democracy such as the United States, multicultural education holds that the primary goal of public education is to foster the intellectual, social, and personal development of all students to their highest potential.[30] In contemporary U.S. society, however, these goals present challenges that have resulted in tension and disagreement among persons of good will.[31]

In this section, we will explore how U.S. schools are responding to the challenge of cultural diversity. First, we will examine the challenges of multicultural education. Next, we will look at cultural learning preferences. Third, we will examine cultural interaction styles.

Challenges of Multicultural Education

The need for effective multicultural education is a fact that must be faced by the educational establishment. Regardless of a student's native culture or co-cultural membership, the goal of multicultural education must be to prepare students to become functioning, productive members of society. This is a significant challenge because cultural diversity in the classroom involves students who have different learning preferences as well as different goals, expectations, and communication styles. Meeting this challenge requires that educational systems continually adapt to the ever-changing cultural dynamics found in U.S. classrooms. The nature of this challenge is provided by Gollnick and Chinn, who state:

> Educators today are faced with an overwhelming challenge: to prepare students from diverse cultural backgrounds to live in a rapidly changing society and a world in which some groups have greater societal benefits than others because of race, ethnicity, gender, class, language, religion, ability, or age. Schools of the future will become increasingly culturally diverse.

> But it is not only ethnic and racial diversity that is challenging schools. During the past 35 years, new waves of immigrants have come from parts of the world unfamiliar to many Americans. With them have come their religions, which seem even stranger to Americans than this new people.[32]

The potential clash between a student's home and school cultures is actualized in at least two ways. When a significant difference exists between the two cultures, teachers can easily misread a student's aptitudes, intent, or abilities as a result of the difference in styles of language use and interaction patterns. Secondly, when such cultural differences exist, teachers may utilize styles of instruction, communication, or discipline that are at odds with community norms.

When educators face these problems, the spirit of multiculturalism demands that everyone's commonality be recognized and affirmed. To help achieve this objective, Banks and his colleagues believe that

> Schools can make a significant difference in the lives of students, and they are a key to maintaining a free and democratic society. Democratic societies are fragile and are works in progress. Their existence depends on a thoughtful citizenry that believes in democratic ideals and is willing and able to participate in the civic life of the nation.[33]

Bruffee further holds that "schools should be looking for ways to engage culturally dissimilar students in understanding and dealing with one another effectively."[34]

From these perspectives, if schools are to meet the challenge of multicultural education, they must provide students with intellectual awakening and growth. Two important aims of multicultural education are to teach about the cultural practices of other people without stereotyping or misinterpreting them, and to teach about one's own cultural practices without casting the practices of other people in a negative manner.[35] Thus, a multicultural student body is important to the experiences of members of both the dominant culture and of co-cultures. Such an approach to education requires an educational strategy in which "students' cultural backgrounds are used to develop effective classroom instruction and school environments. It is designed to support and extend the concepts of culture, diversity, equality, social justice, and democracy in the formal school setting."[36]

Recognizing the goals and challenges of multicultural education is only a first step in learning to become a competent multicultural educator. In the next section, we will turn our attention to the connection between culture and learning so that you can both understand that relationship and use that knowledge to help you better construct effective messages for the multicultural classroom context.

Culture and Learning

Aristotle once wrote, "To learn is a natural pleasure, not confined to philosophers, but common to all men." While learning itself may be natural to humankind, people differ in how they prefer to learn. Every person has his or her own individual ways of gathering and processing information, which manifest in how he or she learns and solves problems in day-to-day situations. These personal cognitive abilities, which are acquired in the course of a long socialization process, are called *learning preferences*.[37] Over time, each culture has likewise adopted approaches to learning that best fit its collective needs. Hofstede describes this process as one in which "our cognitive development is determined

REMEMBER THIS

There is a strong link between culture and learning that is reflected in how people prefer to learn and how they tend to process information.

by the demands of the environment in which we grew up: a person will be good at doing things that are important to him or her and that she or he has occasion to do often. Cognitive abilities are rooted in the patterns of a society."[38] Consequently, the manner in which people prefer to learn is culturally diverse, and this diversity affects the way in which people learn and process information.[39] The strength of the link between culture and learning is shown by Hollins, King, and Haymen, who report that culture and ethnicity have a far greater influence on learning than does social class.[40]

Although there is an array of culturally influenced learning preferences, it is important at this juncture to note that no learning approach is "better" or "worse" than another.[41] In fact, diverse learning preferences may be an advantage to education. As Gay believes, learning preferences should be looked upon as tools to improve the school achievement of diverse students by creating more cultural congruity in the teaching/learning process.[42] Additionally, research has shown that "when students are permitted to learn difficult academic information or skills through their identified learning style preferences, they tend to achieve statistically higher test and aptitude scores than when instruction is dissonant with their preferences."[43]

Children entering the multicultural classroom come from culturally diverse backgrounds and bring with them different ideas about education. This gives rise to two subjects relevant to multicultural education: (1) cultural ways of knowing and (2) cultural learning preferences. Both of these issues affect how students learn and participate in the educational process.

CULTURAL WAYS OF KNOWING

Ways of knowing refers to the methods people employ to think and become aware of their universe. Although the field of philosophy includes *epistemology*, the systematic study of thought, we have chosen a different approach to this topic. We will now introduce you to the thinking processes of two traditional cultures to show you how diverse the acquisition of knowledge can be.

Although today many cultures rely on science and the scientific method to gain new knowledge, indigenous cultures frequently depend on traditional knowledge, which is gained through direct experience. Knowledge from experience accumulates over time "as a result of new experiences that modify or add to the storehouse of wisdom."[44] Traditional knowledge, according to Chisenga, is characterized as based on experience, tested over centuries of use, adapted to local culture and environments, dynamic, and subject to change.[45]

Traditional native Hawaiians, for instance, believe that thinking comes from the intestines, the "gut" that links the heart and the mind. In Hawaiian culture, feelings and emotions are inseparable from knowing, wisdom, and intelligence. In addition, according to Spring, for the Hawaiian, learning must include an aesthetic or practical dimension. Knowledge must link the spirit and the physical self and help foster interpersonal relationships.[46] This Hawaiian view differs significantly from the Western rational view, in which the cognitive domain of intellectual activity is separate from the affective domain of emotion and thinking comes from the head/brain.

Holistic ways of knowing are a characteristic of the Kwara'ae people of the Solomon Islands. In their system, there is no detachment of the knower from the known. Knowledge is gained through sensory experiences, which are characterized as five kinds of "seeing": (1) physical seeing with the eyes; (2) seeing with the mind, which consists of insight or foresight; (3) seeing the unseen or spirits; (4) seeing beyond temporal boundaries, such as seeing something that indicates a future event; and (5) seeing through a medium or traditional healer to reveal the nature of an illness or the outcome of an event seen in a dream.[47]

Our purpose above was not to provide an exhaustive examination of how people come to know, but to give you a brief glimpse of the diverse processes some cultures employ in order to gain knowledge. We will now turn our attention to the influence of culture on individual learning preferences.

CULTURAL LEARNING PREFERENCES

A *learning preference* is usually defined as the way in which individuals like to receive and process information.[48] Learning preferences describe the different processes people use to absorb information, solve problems, and create objects. Learning preferences also emphasize the thoughts and feelings associated with these processes and thus help us understand the distinct preferences of our students.[49] They are influenced by the learners' preferred modalities (auditory, visual, and kinesthetic), their preference for cooperative versus competitive approaches to learning, and the perceived value of education and schooling.[50] There are vast differences among learners within ethnic groups, and these differences may be due not just to culture but to social class, the language spoken at home, the number of years or generations in the United States, and simple individual differences.[51]

The National Task Force on Learning Style and Brain Behavior adopted the following definition of learning preference:

> Learning [preference] is that consistent pattern of behavior and performance by which an individual approaches educational experiences. It is the composite of characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how a learner perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment. It is formed in the deep structure of neural organization and personality [that] molds and is molded by human development and the cultural experiences of home, school, and society.[52]

Education researchers have investigated learning preferences and teaching methods to determine how children from diverse backgrounds best learn. Below we will examine two approaches to learning. The first uses four bipolar scales to identify continuums that reflect learning preferences. The second approach is based on the work of Carl Jung and uses the interaction of perceptual and judgmental dimensions to describe four specific learning preferences. Although each described style is unique, you will see some overlap between them. From this discussion, you should develop an enhanced sense of how people from different cultures and co-cultures prefer to learn.

Field Independence versus Field Sensitivity. This learning preference is based on how people tend to perceive their environment and whether they focus on the field (the whole concept) or concentrate on parts of the field. This style is sometimes referred as to "whether one sees the whole forest or just the trees." In describing field-sensitive

individuals, Gollnick and Chinn report that these "individuals have a more global perspective of their surroundings; they are more sensitive to the social field. Field-independent individuals tend to be more analytical and more comfortably focused on impersonal, abstract aspects of stimuli in the environment."[53] Field-sensitive students prefer to work with others, seek guidance from their teachers, and receive rewards based on group relations. Field-independent students prefer to work independently, are task oriented, and prefer rewards based on individual competition.

Low-context, highly industrialized, individualistic societies such as the United States are predominantly field-independent. High-context, traditional, collectivistic societies like Mexico and Japan tend to be field sensitive. According to Leung, African-American, Asian-American, Latino, American Indian, and Hmong students prefer a field-sensitive, holistic style.[54] Kush indicates, however, that while children raised in traditional Mexican settings tend to develop a more field-dependent learning style, children raised in Mexican-American families that have assimilated aspects of the Anglo culture seem to embrace a more field-independent learning style.[55]

Cooperation versus Competition. This learning style reflects whether students prefer to work together in a cooperative environment or to work independently in competition with one another. Students from collective cultures expect and accept group work; in fact, they often work harder in a group than they do alone. Students in individualistic cultures expect to be graded more on individual work. Cultures, however, do vary in the degree to which they stress cooperation or competition. Latino cultures, says Grossman, teach their children to cooperate and work collectively in groups. North Americans, on the other hand, teach their young to work individually and to compete with one another.[56] In addition to the Latino culture, African Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Rim Americans, Filipino Americans, and Hawaiians tend to raise their children cooperatively. Students working together on class assignments manifest this emphasis in the classroom. For example, in Hawaiian families, multiple caretakers, particularly older siblings, bring up children. According to Hollins, King, and Haymen, this behavior extends to the classroom and is evidenced by "high rates of peer interaction, frequently offering help to peers or requesting assistance from them."[57] To give another example, Cleary and Peacock indicate that Native Americans usually do better in cooperative rather than competitive learning environments.[58]

Trial and Error versus "Watch, Then Do." Some people prefer to learn by engaging themselves in a task and learning to do it by trial and error. Others desire demonstrations and want to observe first, then attempt to do the task. Many mainstream American students prefer to solve problems and reach conclusions through trial and error. This approach, however, is not common in all cultures. As Grossman notes, in many cultures, "individuals are expected to continue to watch how something is done as many times and for as long as necessary until they feel they can do it."[59] Many Native American students, say Cleary and Peacock, prefer to watch others until they feel competent to engage in an educational activity.[60]

Tolerance versus Intolerance for Ambiguity. This classification reflects how well people contend with ambiguity. Students from some cultures are open minded about contradictions, differences, and uncertainty. Students from other cultures prefer a structured, predictable environment with little change. Although the U.S. culture generally shows a high tolerance for ambiguity, the classroom tends to be an exception. The U.S.

school day is frequently quite structured, with students moving from subject to subject, and often from room to room, based on the clock. Tolerance or intolerance for ambiguity also affects what is taught in the classroom. For example, U.S. culture emphasizes right/wrong, correct/incorrect, yes/no answers and values logic, rationalism, and cause-and-effect relationships. In contrast, many non-Western cultures are less tied to logic and rationalism. American Indian cultures, for instance, give little regard to seeking truth in absolute terms.

In a different approach to understanding learning preferences, Silver, Strong, and Perini[61] have developed a model of learning styles based upon the work of Carl Jung. This model is built upon two cognitive dimensions: perception and judgment. The perception dimension is bounded by sensing and intuition. *Sensing* involves step-by-step procedures and concreteness, while *intuition* involves insight and abstraction. The judgment dimension is bounded by thinking and feeling. *Thinking* is concerned with logic and objectivity, while *feeling* involves emotion and spontaneity. All learning involves both perception and judgment; thus, the model produces four combinations that describe learning preferences. They are:

- Sensing–Thinking (Mastery Preference)
- Sensing–Feeling (Interpersonal Preference)
- Intuitive–Thinking (Understanding Preference)
- Intuitive–Feeling (Self-Expressive Preference)[62]

CONSIDER THIS

Using the four learning preferences listed below, give each dimension a numerical range between 1 and 7. Now, think about yourself and place your learning style along each of the given dimensions by assigning a number representing your position on each dimension.

Field independence vs. field sensitivity

Cooperation vs. competition

Trial and error vs. "watch, then do"

Tolerance vs. intolerance for ambiguity

After considering your position along these learning preference dimensions, how do you see yourself as a learner?

Mastery (Sensing–Thinking) Learners. Students with a mastery learning preference tend to be realistic, practical, and matter-of-fact. They are efficient and results oriented, preferring activity to words and participation to theory. They possess a high level of energy for doing things that are pragmatic, logical, and useful. Sensing–Thinking learners tend to be organized and efficient and try to complete their work on time. They like hands-on and technical learning, and prefer to focus more on things than on ideas or people. These learners prefer doing almost anything to sitting in their seats listening to someone talk. They learn best when they are actively engaged, able to see tangible results from their efforts, and in control of their task. They often ask "what" and "how" questions, and prefer step-by-step directions when assigned a task. More than any other learners, they want to know exactly what is expected of them. They may lose interest in an activity if it moves too slowly, or if they can see no practical use for it.[63]

Understanding (Intuitive–Thinking) Learners. These students are theoretical, intellectual, and knowledge-oriented. They enjoy being challenged intellectually and figuring things out for themselves. They are curious about ideas, have a tolerance for theory, enjoy complex problems, and are concerned about long-range consequences. Intuitive–Thinking Learners prefer to learn by following a logical, organized, systematic approach. They like to plan and organize their ideas, and ascertain what resources they will need, before beginning work on a task. They prefer working independently or with thinkers and need little feedback until their work is completed. When a task has captured their attention, they are patient and persistent in completing difficult assignments. Intuitive-Thinking learners, like field-independent learners, enjoy breaking problems down into their component parts, reasoning things out, and looking for logical relationships. These learners are also called Understanding Learners because they like to probe ideas deeply and thoroughly in order achieve deep understanding.[64]

Self-Expressive (Intuitive-Feeling) Learners. Students with an Intuitive-Feeling learning preference are usually curious, insightful, and imaginative. They are people who dare to dream, are committed to their values, are open to investigating alternatives, and are constantly searching for new and atypical ways to express themselves. They eagerly explore ideas, generate new solutions to problems, and express concern about moral dilemmas. Although their interests may be varied and unpredictable, they prefer activities that allow them to use their imaginations and do things in unique ways. They dislike routine or rote assignments and prefer dealing with questions that are open ended, such as "What would happen if . . .?" Intuitive-Feeling learners are largely independent and nonconforming. They hold no fear of being different and are usually aware of their own and others' impulses. Intuitive-Feeling learners are also called Self-Expressive learners because they look for unique and creative ways to express themselves.[65]

Interpersonal (Sensing–Feeling) Learners. Sensing–Feeling learners are social, friendly, and interpersonally directed. They are sensitive both to their own and to other people's feelings. Their interests lie in things that directly affect people's lives, rather than impersonal facts or theories. These learners prefer to employ a personal approach to learning, and work best when they are emotionally involved in learning. They have a propensity toward spontaneity and frequently act on impulse or do what seems to "feel right." Sensing–Feeling learners take particular pleasure in personal attention. They need to be relaxed, comfortable, and able to enjoy themselves while they learn. They are primarily concerned with the question, "Of what value is this to me?" They need to recognize connections between what they are learning and their personal experiences. They make little distinction between school and life, and when school becomes too far removed from the human context and important real-life issues, they can become bored or detached or start talking to a classmate.[66]

This set of learning preferences does not correlate as well with specific cultures as does the set identified earlier in this chapter as field-independence versus field sensitivity, cooperation versus competition, trial and error versus "watch, then do," and tolerance versus intolerance for ambiguity. We believe, however, that being aware of these cognition-related processes of perception and judgment as they describe learning preferences can be very useful to educators striving to create classroom communities that acknowledge and incorporate the learning preferences of all students.

RELATIONAL STYLES FOR LEARNING

The term *relational styles* refers to the manner in which people relate to one another. Like other aspects of human behavior, how people interact with others is learned within a cultural context. Individual relational styles carry over into the classroom setting and may affect classroom interaction. Although there are numerous relational styles, we will focus our discussion on three such styles that are relevant to the multicultural education setting.

Dependency/Independence. This relational style reflects the degree to which students rely on the support, help, and opinions of their teachers. Grossman highlights some cultural differences regarding this relational style when he notes that "compared to European-American students, many but not all non–European-American students, especially Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Filipino Americans, and Southeast Asian Americans, tend to be more interested in obtaining their teachers' direction and feedback."[67] If, as an educator, you are aware of this need for outside support, you can develop effective support strategies for students who seem to show little initiative or independence.

Participation/Passivity. Some students like to be actively engaged in the learning process, while others prefer to remain passive. Some cultures train their children to participate actively in the learning process by asking questions and engaging in discussion. In other cultures, teachers hold all the information and disseminate it to the students, who then are expected to passively listen and take notes. In many Latino, Asian, and Pacific Islander cultures, students are expected to learn by listening, watching (observing), and imitating. In the American school system, however, critical thinking, judgmental questioning, and active initiation of discussion are expected patterns of relational interaction.

Impulsivity/Reflectivity. Students from different cultural backgrounds may differ in how long they think about a question or problem before arriving at a conclusion or stating an answer. In the United States, students are taught to make quick responses to questions. As Gollnick and Chinn observe, "Impulsive students respond rapidly to tasks; they are the first ones to raise their hands to answer the teacher's question and the first ones to complete a test."[68] In other cultures, such as the Japanese, students are reflective and arrive at answers slowly. Two Japanese proverbs underscore the idea of being reflective: "Add caution to caution," and "He who rushes after two hares will catch neither." In cultures that emphasize reflectivity, students who guess or err are perceived as guilty of not having taken enough time to find the correct answer. In many Asian cultures, such behavior can result in a painful loss of face. Asians and American Indians, notes Grossman, are examples of students who are taught to examine all sides of an issue and all possible implications before answering.[69] On the impulsivity/reflectivity scale, Mexican and North American cultures are somewhat similar. Both teach their children to think on their feet and make quick responses or guesses to questions. The major difference between these two cultures lies in their motivation to respond. According to Grossman, Latino students respond quickly because they wish to please their teachers and make the moment pleasant; North American students respond quickly because they are motivated by individual success and achievement.[70]

Knowing of these diverse learning and relational preferences should cause you to realize the potential for chaos in a classroom if some or all of these learning and relational

preferences are present simultaneously. Schools that provide a multicultural learning environment must find a way in which all students utilize learning and relational styles that best suit their cultural backgrounds.

CULTURAL MOTIVATION STYLES

In addition to having specific learning styles, cultures also emphasize specific reasons to engage in learning. These reasons are called *motivation styles* and are the underlying reasons why students want to learn. What motivates students to learn is a primary concern for multicultural educators, who must be aware of and employ a variety of motivational techniques that coincided with their students' cultural backgrounds. Here, we will discuss four motivation styles that influence the multicultural classroom: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, learning on demand, and learning when interested.

Intrinsic Motivation. Some students possess an internal drive to succeed. This is called *intrinsic motivation*. Simply excelling at a task is sufficient reward to motivate these students. European students generally are motivated to learn for intrinsic reasons. U.S. American students, on the other hand, are often motivated to succeed academically so that they can secure a good position and earn a great deal of money—a manifestation of the materialism value discussed earlier in Chapter 5.

Extrinsic Motivation. Students who require *extrinsic motivation* lack an internal drive and need to be stimulated by external rewards. Asian and Asian-American students are more likely than other students to be extrinsically motivated. As Yao observes, "Asian children are often found to be motivated extrinsically by their parents and relatives. They study hard because they want to please their parents and impress their relatives."[71] American Indian students, says Grossman, are often externally motivated because they want to please others rather than offend or hurt them.[72]

Learning on Demand. *Learning on demand* occurs in an educational environment that has a set curriculum. Students are expected to study that which is scheduled without regard to their particular interest. Students from cultures with this orientation excel in this environment. Grossman captures this motivation style when he says, "All cultures require children to learn many things, whether they want to or not."[73] In Japan, for instance, all students are required to memorize information such as dates, complex sequences, and lengthy formulas in mathematics, science, and social studies.[74]

Learning When Interested. In some cultures, people believe that they should only have to learn what is useful and interesting to them rather than gain information just for the sake of gaining information. This motivation style is referred to as *learning when interested*. Students from cultures with this orientation tend to thrive when they are permitted to learn topics that are of immediate interest and relevance to them. Latino and American Indian cultures, for example, stress the importance of learning what is relevant and useful. Walker, Dodd, and Bigelow describe the American Indian approach to learning in the following paragraph:

> Native American students prefer to learn information that is personally interesting to them; therefore, interest is a key factor in their learning. When these students are not interested

in a subject, they do not control their attention and orient themselves to learning an uninteresting task. Rather, they allocate their attention to other ideas that are more personally interesting, thus appearing detached from the learning situation.[75]

CONSIDER THIS

There is cultural diversity in why people are motivated to learn. List some of the forms of motivation and identify cultures whose members respond to those forms of motivation.

In light of the numerous examples we have just examined, it should be clear that multicultural educators must function within a complex matrix of learning preferences and motivational styles in their classrooms. It may be impossible to accommodate all of these preferences and styles simultaneously. But with awareness of these various learning dynamics, teachers can selectively employ preferences and styles that are most appropriate for their particular classroom.

Language Diversity in Multicultural Education

Language is an important and significant social dynamic in the multicultural classroom. As we indicated in Chapter 6, language is a system of symbolic substitution that enables you to share your experiences and internal states with others. In an ideal setting, the use of a communal language helps create mutual understanding, facilitates shared meanings, and permits communication with others at a similar level. The impact of immigration, however, has caused the use of a communal language to fade in American schools. As Gann indicates, students today arrive in schools with a variety of languages and dialects, determined by region, neighborhood, and social class.[76]

Extent of Diversity

In the United States, there are over five and one-half million children for whom English is a second language. In 2006, 20 percent of all five- to seventeen-year-old students attending U.S. public schools did not speak English at home. Five percent of this student population only spoke English with difficulty.[77] Among this population of students, 64 percent of Asian-American children spoke a language other than English at home, and 72 percent of Latino students spoke Spanish at home.[78] English is a second language for nearly 10 percent (about 5.5 million) of the U.S. student population.[79] Consequently, the educational system has to recognize and accommodate the needs of these English language learners (ELLs). English language learners (ELLs) are turning up in suburban and rural areas as well as urban areas like New York City, where students come from about one hundred native language backgrounds.[80] This means that schools everywhere must be prepared to provide not only academic instruction but English language acquisition as well.

This lack of a communal language in American classrooms is problematic, because language diversity confounds the educational process. The dialects and languages spoken by students influence teachers' perceptions of students' academic ability, their

REMEMBER THIS

There are over 5,500,000 schoolchildren in the United States for whom English is a second language.

learning opportunities, evaluations of their contributions to class, and the way they are grouped for instruction. Language also can be the basis for categorization and the formation of in-groups and out-groups, especially within an institutional context in which the languages spoken have unequal status. Languages are often symbols of group boundaries and, therefore, can be the sources of intergroup conflicts and tensions.[81] Unfortunately, the educational system's response to this problem has not always been appropriate. Discrimination against students who use nonstandard language is quite common in various policies and school practices, even those that call for linguistic tolerance.[82]

If English language learners from diverse cultural backgrounds and languages are to succeed educationally, it is imperative that educators understand and respect students for whom English is a second language. King suggests this requires demonstrating patience and valuing students' contribution to the class. To this end, educators need to model respectful yet challenging communication and questioning skills that show respect for the diverse modes of language and student learning.[83] In addition, teachers must recognize that their students' ethnic identity is tied directly to their native language.

Language and Identity

Language performs the vital function of helping individuals construct and maintain their ethnic identities. As Dicker notes, "It is not surprising that our native language is often referred to as our 'mother tongue,' a term which recalls our earliest memories and influences."[84] A person's native language has deep significance because it is the seed of identity that blossoms as children grow.[85] Language helps individuals construct an identity that ties them to their in-group and at the same time sets them apart from other possible reference groups.[86] When non– or limited–English-speaking students enter the U.S. school system, they are encouraged to assimilate into the English-speaking culture because academic proficiency in English-language skills affects students' abilities to adapt socially at school and is also highly predictive of academic success in the United States. The ability to perform on multiple-choice tests, extract meaning from written text, and argue a point, both orally and in writing, are essential to high levels of academic attainment.[87] This assimilation, however, can become a wedge between students' existing cultural identity and the social system into which they are entering. Thompson provides an example of this conflict when she relates an African-American student's depiction of a teacher who was constantly attempting to correct her Ebonics pronunciation: "In my opinion, this man was crazy if he really thought I was going to go around enunciating words in the manner in which he insisted. To do so, I believed, would make me an object of ridicule to my family and friends."[88] Teachers can mediate this difficult process by showing respect for their students' native languages and thus ease students' adaptation to an English-speaking culture.

English Language Learners

One thing that should be obvious to you by now is that English language learners, or ELLs, have a hard time in school. Their difficulty involves both cognitive and linguistic issues. McKeon has identified four sources of their difficulty. First, ELLs must be concerned with both the cognitive aspects of learning subject matter and the linguistic problems of learning English. ELLs "must decipher the many structures and functions of the language before any content will make sense."[89] They must not only grasp the subject content but also make the new language express what they have learned. ELLs, therefore, must perform at a much higher cognitive and linguistic level than their English-speaking peers, who need only to deal with the cognitive aspects of learning.

A second problem faced by ELLs is academic insufficiency. Developing higher cognitive and linguistic levels is often difficult because of academic delays. Many students who enter U.S. schools are academically deficient in their native language. As a result, it is very difficult for them to function at prescribed grade levels, let alone at higher cognitive and linguistic levels.[90]

A third problem for ELLs is that they enroll in U.S. schools at various points in their academic careers—kindergarten, second grade, eleventh grade, and so on. The problem this creates, according to McKeon, is that "the higher the grade level, the more limited English proficiency is likely to weigh on students because at higher levels of schooling, the cognitive and linguistic loads are heavier."[91]

The fourth complication for ELLs is that they arrive from countries that may emphasize different curricular sequences, content objectives, and instructional pedagogies. A deductive instructional approach generally is used in the United States, but many Asian cultures frequently use an inductive approach. United States schools emphasize written education, whereas African and Middle Eastern schools emphasize oral education.

As we have noted before, the U.S. culture values argumentation, debate, directness, and assertiveness. Since many other cultures emphasize accord, harmony, and cooperation, students from these cultures may not possess the oral argumentative skills that are often required in U.S. classrooms.

Teacher Multicultural Competence

We have highlighted several key issues in multicultural education. By so doing, it has not been our intent to generate an image of an educational system that is helplessly mired in problems. Instead, by identifying the impact of culture on educating a diverse society, illuminating the problematic issues, and considering the concerns of all those involved, we hope to extend the dialogue of multicultural education.

One important conclusion should have emerged by now: "Communication in the learning environment is influenced by cultural, psychological, and contextual factors and it involves the application of interpersonal and intrapersonal values."[92] Before educators can create effective messages, they must possess a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and social class diversity present in today's schools. Thus, as Banks and his colleagues indicate, "teachers should become knowledgeable about the cultural backgrounds of their students. They also must acquire the skills needed to translate that knowledge into effective instruction and an enriched curriculum."[93] In other words, effective teachers are culturally competent.

Cultural competence reflects the internalization of the values and behaviors a teacher must have in order to interact effectively in a culturally diverse environment.[94]

Elements of multicultural teacher competence involve specific behaviors that lead to the ability to assess culture, value diversity, manage the dynamics of difference, and adapt to diversity.[95] A culturally competent teacher, therefore, engages in practices that provide equitable outcomes for all learners.[96] Culturally competent teachers open the minds and hearts of their learners, assuring that differences are not perceived or treated as deficits.[97]

A culturally competent teacher understands that culture creates expectations about appropriate behaviors for teachers and students alike, and prescribes the "best" ways to learn. To become culturally competent, therefore, teachers must obtain a more coherent view of learning preferences, a view that provides not only personal empowerment but also a social perspective truly reflective of the social reality in the larger world.

Because schools abound with cultural diversity, educators, students, and parents must learn to communicate with one another and work together to solve their problems. With this optimistic outlook in mind, we will consider four topics that we believe can lead to the development of culturally competent classroom communication: (1) multicultural competence, (2) multicultural classrooms, (3) attaining multicultural communication competence, and (4) using effective multicultural communication strategies.

Becoming Multiculturally Competent

When you enter a multicultural educational situation, you must be prepared to deal with the preexisting conflicting cultural values and practices. You must also be prepared to help answer this question posed by Hollins: "In a culturally diverse society where a central purpose of school is cultural transmission, whose culture should be transmitted, and whose cultural values and practices should guide the schooling process for the nation?"[98] The process of becoming multiculturally competent is one whereby a person develops competencies in multiple ways of perceiving, evaluating, believing, and doing. The focus is on understanding and learning to negotiate cultural diversity among nations as well as within a single nation.[99]

According to Spring, multiculturally competent teachers can:

- Recognize, when planning lessons and other classroom activities, the cultural differences in how students see, know, and interrelate with knowledge and the classroom environment.
- Understand how their own culture might differ from those of their students.
- Plan activities that will help students to understand cultural differences, the causes of cultural conflict, and the relationship between cultural differences and social inequalities.[100]

In order to develop the cultural competence necessary to function effectively in a diverse educational environment, you must understand yourself and understand cultural diversity.

UNDERSTANDING SELF

The Greek philosopher Socrates once wrote, "Know thyself." Teacher self-reflection is an important dynamic in understanding self. By honestly examining their attitudes and

beliefs about themselves and others, teachers begin to discover why they are who they are, and can confront biases that influence their value systems. Because teachers' values influence their relationships with students and with students' families, teachers must reconcile negative feelings toward any cultural, language or ethnic group.[101] Put into practical terms, educators must be aware of what they bring to the classroom. Hollins explains this need:

> As a classroom teacher, you bring your own cultural norms into your professional practice. The extent to which your teaching behavior will become an extension of your own culture exclusively or will incorporate the cultures of the students you teach may be influenced by your perceptions of the relationship between culture and school practices, political beliefs, and conceptualization of school learning.[102]

CONSIDER THIS

Reflect on your own experiences with cultural diversity and then answer the following questions.

1. *When was your first school interaction with someone from another culture?*
2. *What were your feelings following this interaction?*
3. *Did this interaction lead you to develop friendships with fellow students who were from different cultures?*
4. *Are students today benefiting from contact with culturally diverse students?*

This self-reflection is important, as Le Roux indicates, because teachers are not always aware of their prejudices, and this can lead to unintentional racism.[103] An honest, straightforward evaluation can be very helpful in discovering your prejudices. Rhine suggests several questions you might ask yourself, such as "What are my strengths?" "What are my weaknesses?" "How can I enhance my strengths and compensate for my weaknesses?" "Do I have any ethnic or gender biases?" "How do these biases manifest themselves in my classroom?" "Does my ethnic or gender identification affect my classroom?" "Am I prepared to handle attacks on my own racial background or those of my students?" "What new knowledge or experiences can I seek to assist in these issues?"[104]

Your answers to these questions can be enlightening as you approach the multicultural learning environment. You will have a good idea of what you can do best, and more importantly, you will know the areas in which you need to improve.

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

Individuals associated with education needs to be as unbiased as possible and know as much as they can about the cultural backgrounds of their students. This includes developing a familiarity with the educational structure of the students' cultural heritages as well as their particular learning-style preferences, linguistic rules, nonverbal behaviors, and gender-role expectations. As Banks and his colleagues say, "Teachers should become knowledgeable about the cultural backgrounds of their students. They should also acquire the skills needed to translate that knowledge into effective instruction and an enriched curriculum."[105] Michie emphasizes this point by insisting that teachers in urban schools must commit themselves to

becoming "students of their students" and students of the communities in which they work.[106]

While this is an admirable goal, it is not easily attained. Wan describes some of the factors that can impede reaching this goal: "When people experience a new cultural environment, they are likely to experience conflict between their own cultural predispositions and the values, beliefs, and opinions of the host culture."[107] Although acquisition of this knowledge places an initial burden on you, such knowledge will facilitate understanding and learning in the classroom. Acknowledging diversity is consistent with the traditional educational goal of exploring alternatives that change students' lives.[108]

Kroeger and Bauer detail some of the essential capabilities competent multicultural teachers must possess:

- The ability to understand and identify differences in approaches to learning and performance, including different learning styles, multiple intelligences, and performance modes
- The ability to design instruction that uses students' strengths as the basis for growth
- An understanding of how students' learning is influenced by individual experiences, talents, and prior learning, as well as language, culture, family, and community values.
- A well-grounded framework for understanding cultural and community diversity
- The ability to learn about and incorporate students' experiences, cultures, and community resources into instruction
- Respect for students as individuals with different personal and family backgrounds and various skills, talents, and interests
- Sensitivity to community and cultural norms
- The ability to make students feel valued for their potential as people, and help them learn to value each other
- Willingness to understand students' families, cultures, and communities, and to use that understanding as a basis for connecting instruction to students' experiences
- Multiple perspectives that they can bring to the discussion of subject matter, including attention to students' personal, family, and community experiences and cultural norms
- The ability to create a learning community in which individual differences are respected[109]

In addition, Spring insists, teachers should strive to become aware of the political and social conditions immigrant groups left behind. With regard to immigrant Cambodians, for instance, very few U.S. educators know about or understand the horror of the "killing fields," the traumatic flight to refugee camps, and the difficulties of camp life. Gaining this type of insight requires more than a simple knowledge of the customs of other countries. Educators at all levels should understand the psychological impact of such political and social upheavals.[110]

In an educational context, where cultural competence guides the development of the social environment, a sense of community is essential. Nelson-Barber and Meier report that discussions with minority students about their schooling experiences have revealed a sense of not feeling at home in the classroom. Students' perceptions of nonmembership are one of the most fundamental issues for proficient multicultural teachers to understand.[111]

Classrooms for Multicultural Education

It might be tempting to think of classroom communication as utterances such as "Open your math books to page 137 and solve problems one through eight." Effective communication in a multicultural classroom encompasses much more. A major goal in multicultural education is to make all students feel welcome and at home in their learning environment. Nelson-Barber and Meier emphasize this important point:

> In order for school to be a place that enables students to become whoever they want to be, it must first be a place where students are recognized and celebrated for who they are. Multicultural classrooms are successful only to the extent that they provide a context for students with different experiences to forge connections with one another, while allowing them to maintain their identity.[112]

One approach to satisfying this important goal is to create a classroom that reflects the cultural dimensions of the local community. The second is to develop a differentiated classroom.

CLASSROOM AS COMMUNITY

In most instances, the goals of schools are bound to universalistic intellectual or social functions associated with the dominant society. The most explicit function to which schools are directed is the inculcation of the broadly shared knowledge and skills deemed necessary for individual participation in the larger society.[113] Therefore, one of the biggest challenges faced by schools serving culturally and linguistically diverse populations is bringing the educational experiences provided by the school in line with the social, cultural, and economic aspirations of the community it serves.[114] A supportive classroom climate fosters feelings of membership and inclusion, promotes fuller development of a student's positive self-image, and enhances self-concept. In addition, when students are free of disruptive anxiety, fear, anger, or depression, they are more likely to make desirable cognitive and affective gains.[115]

You can begin to resolve students' feelings of non-membership by creating a sense of community in the classroom. To attain this objective, Ramsey suggests that educators must move away from teaching practices that exclude and ignore diversity and move toward teaching approaches that recognize and incorporate these differences in all aspects of their instructional approach.[116]

In discussing important aspects of the classroom as community, Leeman suggests that educators must create environments in which commonality among the members of the class is valued. He also recommends that teachers foster an atmosphere of trust and personal involvement among students and between students and teachers, utilize an open way of solving conflicts that students perceive as fair,

CONSIDER THIS

In a multicultural educational setting, why is it important to create a classroom that reflects the cultural makeup of the surrounding community? What benefits accrue to students who learn in this type of environment?

encourage active participation of the students in the school, and emphasize interaction among students.[117]

To create a classroom community, Shade, Kelly, and Oberg suggest several principles that must be observed:

- A learning community is inviting.
- The leader of the learning community sends personally inviting messages.
- An inviting classroom has firm, consistent, and loving control.
- An inviting learning community provides students with a sense that they can accomplish the tasks being asked of them.[118]

Leeman adds that in a classroom with a successful sense of community, students should be able to say, "At school, I feel safe enough to be myself, to give my opinion, to choose what I want to do and do it, and to go wherever I wish."[119]

THE DIFFERENTIATED CLASSROOM

More than a century ago, teachers in one-room prairie schoolhouses faced a demanding challenge. The teacher had to divide her or his time and energy between teaching young children who had never seen or held a book and could neither read nor write, and teaching older, more advanced students who had little interest in what the younger students were doing. Now, in the twenty-first century, Tomlinson insists, teachers still contend with the essential challenge of the old one-room schoolhouse: how can they reach out effectively to students who span the spectrum of learning readiness, personal interests, culturally shaped ways of seeing and speaking about the world, and experiences in that world?[120]

Today, teachers generally work with single-grade classes of students who are nearly the same age, but these children often have an array of needs as great as those found among the children of the one-room school. Thus, a teacher's question remains much the same as it was over one hundred years ago: "How do I divide time, resources, and myself so that I am an effective catalyst for maximizing the talent in all my students?"[121]

Tomlinson believes the answer is through differentiated instruction. In a differentiated classroom, says Tomlinson, teachers begin their instruction based on where students are. They accept and build on the premise that learners differ in important ways, so they are ready to engage students in instruction by respecting their learning preferences, appealing to individual interests, and using varied rates of instruction along with varied degrees of complexity. For example, students should be assigned spelling lists based on a pretest and not on the assumption that all third graders should be working on Spelling List Three. Teachers should match homework to student needs in order to ensure that the practice is meaningful for everyone. Also, students should be provided with a variety of options and approaches related to their learning preferences when creating the final product for an instructional unit. These options should focus on students' interests so they can link what they have learned to something that matters to them as individuals.[122] In differentiated classrooms, teachers ensure that students compete with themselves rather than against other students.[123]

Most of this chapter has dealt with issues of education and cultural diversity. The reason we have devoted so much time to this topic is to give you the background and perspectives to (1) develop multicultural communication competence and (2) create effective multicultural communication strategies.

Multicultural Communication Competence

It is important for teachers to maintain an open dialogue with all of their students. This does not mean that students should be in charge of the learning environment. Instead, it indicates that teachers and students need to discuss and negotiate learning preferences, communication patterns, and expectations about academic achievement and classroom behavior. This requires that students make connections between course content and their preferred learning method. Students' voices should be routinely honored in the classroom through open discussion or teacher/student dialogues.[124]

CONSIDER THIS

1. *What conditions are necessary to create a classroom that reflects the local community?*
2. *How would you design and structure activities that permit students to learn according their own learning preferences?*
3. *How would you negotiate with your students to arrive at a mutually acceptable set of rules governing behavior within your classroom?*
4. *What considerations are necessary to accommodate students who have different concepts of time and work priorities?*
5. *In what ways can you use any native languages your students speak to establish a classroom community?*

Communication competence, however, requires more than just opening the door to student-teacher dialogue. It requires an understanding of which cultural determinants are active in a particular classroom. Le Roux offers several important ideas that you should integrate into your personality in order to become an effective multicultural communicator:

> Within-group differences within a cultural group may be as great as or greater than between-group cultural differences. It must be emphasized that culture is neither the only nor even the most important variable when differences or potentially conflicting situations arise in diverse settings. Socio-economic status, educational background, religion, gender, age, and worldview are some of the determinants that influence who and what we are, but also why we react in a particular way in certain situations.[125]

Multicultural Communication Strategies

Effective communication depends on the use of appropriate communication strategies. The first consideration in developing effective strategies is to think about the culture in which messages are being constructed. For instance, in a traditional U.S. classroom situation, when teachers have a disciplinary problem with a student, they might warn the student that further inappropriate behavior will result in a trip to the vice-principal's office. In a remote Alaskan village, however, the teacher might give a very different message, such as "I'll be steaming with your mother tonight." In this cultural situation, homes in the village have no running water and bathing takes place in a communal gender-specific steam room as a group activity. For the student, this message would translate as "I'll see your mother tonight, so stop misbehaving or I'll talk to her about you." In a more general sense, effective communication strategies should be based upon a number

of factors and assumptions. We will limit our discussion to two specific factors: immediacy and empathy.

IMMEDIACY

Teachers may use *immediacy*, which incorporates approach and avoidance behaviors, to optimize their teacher-student communication and enhance their credibility. According to Johnson and Miller, students are attracted to persons and things they like, evaluate highly, or prefer. They avoid or move away from things they dislike, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer.[126]

Research has revealed a positive relationship between immediacy and cognitive learning, as well as between immediacy and credibility, across numerous cultures. Even in high–power distance cultures such as Kenya, say Johnson and Miller, students seem to benefit from seeing their teachers as approachable.[127] Additionally, Jazayeri reports that immediacy is related to students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness in Mexico, Norway, China, Japan, and Australia, as well as in the United States.[128] Taggar makes several suggestions for culturally responsive teaching that teachers can use to enhance immediacy effects.

- Develop a comfortable classroom atmosphere that integrates the beliefs and values of various cultural groups.
- Provide many opportunities to discuss global topics of interest and relevance with students. Always encourage any diverse perspectives expressed during such conversations.
- Avoid conversations that perpetuate "us" and "them" distinctions. Foster a collective sense of being in the classroom.
- Encourage discussions about unique cultural beliefs and practices, and determine how they are misused by some in order to sustain terrorist activity.
- Be sensitive to cultural customs that might differ from the mainstream, particularly those concerning dress and personal rituals (such as Muslims' daily prayer and annual fasting during Ramadan). Actively seek information about these unique customs, and promote accurate understanding with all students in your class.
- Remind students that school is a safe place of learning for students of *all* cultural backgrounds. If they do not feel safe, it is your obligation as an educator to directly address their feelings of insecurity and/or discomfort.[129]

EMPATHY

The development of empathic faculties on the part of both teachers and students is another requisite for the community classroom. *Empathy* is the ability to assume the role of another and, by imagining the world as the other sees it, predict accurately the motives, attitudes, feelings, and needs of the other. Empathy involves two steps. First, empathic teachers are able to imagine how it must be for immigrant students to adapt to a classroom where surroundings, language, and behavior are often unfamiliar. Second, empathy involves communicating in ways that are rewarding to the student who is the object of empathic prediction.[130]

Accurate prediction requires accepting people for who they are and thus understanding what can realistically be expected of them. Because you accept other people for who they are does not mean that you must agree with what they say or do. Although you accept students' feelings, ideas, and behavior as legitimate, you still do not have to agree

with them. Students do, however, react positively to empathic understanding—to the realization that they are not being evaluated or judged, and are understood from their own point of view rather than from someone else's.[131]

The ability to communicate empathically requires learning specific behaviors and practices; it does not happen automatically. Cooper and Simonds offer four guidelines that you may follow in order to become an empathic communicator:

- *Communicate a supportive climate.* Community classrooms are supposed to create a supportive climate. To nourish this climate, you must create messages that indicate you understand your students' feelings and needs, rather than expressing judgments of student behavior.[132]
- *Attend to a student's nonverbal behavior as well as his or her verbal communication.* Effective interpretation of messages requires that you respond to the cognitive content of the message as well as to the meta-communication expressed nonverbally.[133] For instance, many Puerto Ricans use a nonverbal wrinkling of the nose to signify "what?" In one classroom, when the teacher asked if they had understood the lesson, some students would invariably wrinkle their noses. Not understanding this gesture, the teacher simply went on with the lesson, assuming that the nose wrinkling had no meaning.[134]
- *Accurately reflect and clarify feelings.* There is a tendency to respond more to the content of what others say—the ideas, thoughts, opinions, and attitudes expressed—than to the feelings that they are expressing. Feelings are more difficult to respond to because in the mainstream U.S. culture most people have less experience responding to feelings than to ideas.
- *Be genuine and congruent.* You are not likely to foster a good relationship with students if you communicate in false or misleading ways. A truly constructive relationship is one in which the participants respond to each other in an honest and genuine fashion. Your communication is congruent when the things that you do and say accurately reflect your real thoughts and feelings.[135]

It is important to remember that children have the capacity to make rapid adaptations across vastly different cultural and linguistic systems. When teachers and students work together, learning is facilitated and enjoyable. As Malcolm points out, "We are underestimating teachers when we consider them to be captives to the invisible culture of the classroom, and we are underestimating pupils when we consider them to be captives to their own cultural patterns, which contradict it."[134]

We hope that at this point you understand and appreciate the impact cultural diversity has on the U.S. classroom. And we hope you will acknowledge that an education system that fails to understand cultural diversity will lose the richness of values, worldviews, lifestyles, and perspectives of the diverse U.S. co-cultures.

SUMMARY

- Systems of formal and informal education seek to meet the perceived needs of societies.
- Schools are a primary means by which a culture's history and traditions are passed from generation to generation.
- Schools teach the informal knowledge of a culture.

- Schools are a primary vehicle for teaching cultural values.
- Schools in the United States are becoming increasingly diverse.
- Schools no longer teach only Eurocentric cultural values; instead, today schools routinely teach the experiences and values of many cultures.
- Learning preferences are particular ways in which individuals receive or process information.
- Cognitive, communication, relational, and motivational learning preferences have a profound impact on classroom learning.
- Students who are limited in their English proficiency face various obstacles in the classroom.
- Teachers should be aware of what they bring to the classroom in terms of their strengths, weaknesses, and biases.
- Assessing the acculturation levels of the students in the classroom will help teachers determine how much their students are involved in their own culture as well as the Anglo-American culture.

ACTIVITIES

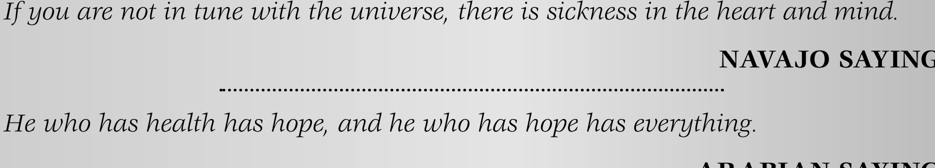
1. Looking back upon your school experiences, make a plan that would integrate the various cultures in a multicultural classroom into a classroom community.
2. Explain how you would reconcile the different learning preferences of students in a sixth-grade classroom with the following student balance: six Latinos, eight European Americans, five African Americans, four Japanese, and one Iranian.
3. Given the classroom described above, what kinds of communication problems would you anticipate at the beginning of the school year?

DISCUSSION IDEAS

1. In a graduate seminar, a college professor has a new graduate student from Japan with excellent reading fluency in English but limited oral proficiency. What should be the professor's expectations about the Japanese student's full participation in seminar discussions?
2. In what ways does your current classroom setting embody U.S. cultural values?
3. As an educational administrator, how would you handle a situation where parents complain that a teacher ignores culturally diverse learning preferences?
4. What can be done to make education effective if teachers must deal with a variety of learning preferences and language differences?

CHAPTER 10

Cultural Influences on Context: The Health Care Setting



If you are not in tune with the universe, there is sickness in the heart and mind.

NAVAJO SAYING

He who has health has hope, and he who has hope has everything.

ARABIAN SAYING

Health Care Communication in a Culturally Diverse Society

When the American physician entered the examination room to greet Seyyed, his Iranian patient, he found him huddled on the floor, mumbling in a seemingly incoherent manner. His first thought was that the patient was in distress and may have fainted, fallen off the examination table, and perhaps even struck his head. But when he tried to assist him, the patient became agitated and resisted his help.[1]

During the evening hours, a Chinese-born surgeon phoned the night nurse to check on a patient scheduled for surgery the next morning. The nurse advised the physician that she had noticed a new hesitancy in the patient's attitude. "To tell you the truth, doctor, I think Mrs. Colby is getting cold feet."[2] The physician, hearing the term "cold feet," suspected a possible lower limb circulation problem and ordered a number of unnecessary vascular tests.

As he was being wheeled into an operating room, the American patient asked his Korean-born surgeon if he was going to "kick the bucket." The Korean physician, wanting to reassure the patient that his upcoming surgery would be successful, responded affably, "Oh, yes, you are definitely going to kick the bucket."[3]

A young Japanese exchange student had been in the United States only three weeks when she suffered an appendicitis attack and was rushed to the hospital emergency room.

As she was being moved to surgery, an attendant said, “You are really lucky. They will use Operating Suite 4 for your operation. Suite 4 is our most modern operating room.” Suddenly the woman began to cry hysterically.

These four examples reveal how misunderstandings and unintended consequences may take place during intercultural health care communication. The first circumstance demonstrates how language differences and ignorance of other cultures can lead to a misunderstanding and adversely affect communication. Seyyed spoke no English, and the doctor did not comprehend the cultural circumstance. It was only later that the physician learned that Seyyed was a Muslim and had been praying. And, although Seyyed would have preferred to pray on a prayer rug in a place where he would not be interrupted, it was growing late for the fourth of his five mandatory daily prayers. Seyyed consequently took advantage of his momentary privacy in the examination room to fulfill his prayer obligation. If the doctor had known that Seyyed was a Muslim and had possessed an elementary understanding of Islamic customs, he would have realized that his patient was probably praying and would have given him some privacy.[4]

In the second and third situations, failure to recognize culture-specific idiomatic expressions led to misunderstandings, first on the part of the doctor who ordered unnecessary tests, and second on the part of the patient who was not reasonably assured that he would survive his surgery.

Our fourth instance demonstrates the power of symbols. In Japan, one pronunciation of the number four is identical to that of the word *death*, so the number four is considered bad luck, much the same as the number thirteen is in the United States. In her nervous state, the Japanese student reacted hysterically because she believed being operated on in a room numbered 4 would bring her bad luck during the operation.

Health Care Communication

Effective health care delivery is dependent upon clear communication which is an essential element in every form of medicine and health care. Luckman rightly insists that competent health care delivery requires effective communication between all of the individuals who are involved: patients, physicians, health care professionals, language interpreters, and family members.[5]

If communication between health care providers and patients is not clear, the entire medical treatment process is problematic. However, clear communication may be hindered when the participants come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Purnell and Paulanka highlight this point when they indicate that global and multicultural populations have a major impact on the ability of health care providers to provide adequate levels of service.[6] Kundhal and Kundhal echo this same concern when they write, “the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of patients can shape their views of illness and well-being in both the physical and spiritual realm and affect their perceptions of health care as well as the outcome of their treatment.”[7]

Cultural diversity in worldviews may adversely hinder effective communication between patients and health care providers.

As we have stated throughout this book, the United States, for a host of reasons, is one of the most diverse countries in the world. Much of that

diversity spills over to the health care system. In short, the U.S. health care system is faced with the reality of cultural diversity and the tensions it can create between traditional and alternative approaches to health care. People from diverse cultures frequently believe quite different things about illness, health care, and death. Some of their cultural belief systems are very different from Western views of health and produce telling difficulties for both patients and providers.[8]

In a multicultural environment, effective communication can only occur when providers are sufficiently versed in those aspects of culture that affect their patients' ability to understand the ramifications of their messages. In a multicultural health care setting, it is the health care provider who is responsible for communicating effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. A fundamental understanding of the relationships among health care, culture, and communication, therefore, is a prerequisite for everyone involved in the health care professions.

In this chapter we will look at the unique circumstances of health care communication in a culturally diverse society by examining (1) beliefs about health care and the treatment and prevention of illness, (2) cross-cultural medical competence, (3) language complications, (4) death and dying issues, and (5) health care communication strategies.

Diverse Health Care Belief Systems

All cultures possess beliefs about illness and health that are derived from their worldviews and are passed down from generation to generation. These beliefs often vary from one culture to another and lead to different and sometimes idiosyncratic concepts of illness. As Andrews notes,

> Generally, theories of health and disease/illness causation are based on the prevailing worldview held by a group. These worldviews include a group's health-related attitudes, beliefs, and practices, and frequently are referred to as health belief systems.[9]

A. Ramey/PhotoEdit

In many cultures, there is a belief that faith, prayer, and even magic can create good health and cure illness.

Culture and ethnicity, therefore, create unique patterns of beliefs and perceptions about health and illness. In turn, these patterns influence how illness is recognized, to what it is attributed, how it is interpreted, and how and when health services are sought.[10]

Cultural notions about health and illness differ not only around the world but also among co-cultures in the United States. In Chinese medicine, which is practiced by millions of the Chinese who live in the United States, a prevailing belief posits that "health is a state of spiritual and physical harmony with nature."[11] As a consequence, indicate Hunter and Sexton, the Chinese tend to be interested in health care that helps them attain this ideal.[11] To cite another example, many Africans and African Americans frequently perceive pain as a sign of illness or disease and often employ folk medicine to cure their illnesses.[12] Consequently, providers should not approach health care from a single cultural perspective, and must learn to treat patients from other cultures in a culturally competent manner.[13]

Andrews suggests a comprehensive paradigm in which health belief systems are divided into three major categories: *supernatural/magico/religious*, *holistic*, and *scientific/biomedical*, each with its own corresponding system of related beliefs.[14] We will utilize Andrews' categories to organize our discussion regarding the wide variety of culturally derived beliefs about the causes, treatment, and prevention of illness.

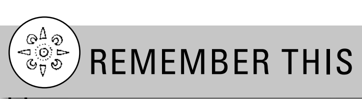
Supernatural/Magico/Religious Tradition

UNDERLYING PREMISES

The supernatural/magico/religious health care tradition comes from a belief system in which the world is perceived as an arena where supernatural forces predominate.[15] Followers of this tradition hold strong beliefs about the existence of sorcery, magic, and evil spirits. Andrews describes this system as one where "the fate of the world and those in it, including humans, depends on the actions of God, or the gods, or other supernatural forces for good or evil."[16]

CAUSES OF ILLNESS

In this system, illness is attributed to spiritual forces.[17] From this perspective, "sorcery, breaching a taboo, intrusion of a disease object, intrusion of a disease-causing spirit, and loss of the soul are five widespread belief categories perceived to be responsible for illness."[18] Thus, in some cultures people believe that illness results from the possession of the body by evil sprits or from the casting of evil spells.[19] In addition, other cultural groups believe that illness is a sign of weakness, a punishment for evildoing, or retribution for shameful behavior such as disrespect toward elders.[20] Disease, therefore, is perceived to be the result of active intervention by supernatural beings (deities or gods), nonhuman beings (ghosts or evil spirits), or evil humans



People who subscribe to a supernatural/magico/religious worldview believe that one's state of health is affected by sorcery, magic, and evil spirits.

Photo disc/Getty Images

Cultures differ in their understanding of the causes, treatments, and prevention of illness.

(witches or sorcerers). The ill person is, therefore, a victim of punishment rendered by the supernatural agent.

The Hmong of Southeast Asia often attribute disease to spiritual forces such as malevolent spirits or ghosts, who bring ill health, or to the lack of protective ancestral spirits.[21] Giger and Davidhizar report that the Hmong "believe an individual's spirit is the guardian of the person's well-being. If the spirit is happy, then the person is happy—and well. A severe shock or scare may cause the individual's spirit to leave, resulting in unhappiness and ill health."[22]

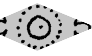
Laotians, as Dresser relates, hold a belief similar to the Hmong whereby "Phi (the spirits of nature) control people's lives and can cause illness."[23] For the Laotians, illness also may be caused by losing one of the body's thirty-two souls or by a sorcerer who can cast a spell by projecting foreign objects into a person's body. Often, examining the yolk of a freshly broken egg will tell a Laotian healer the exact cause of an illness.

Similarly, many Vietnamese subscribe to supernatural causes of illness.[24] For example, as Nowak indicates, many Vietnamese believe health problems such as the common cold, mild fevers, and headaches are caused by the natural element *cao gio*, which is associated with bad weather and cold drafts.[25]

Some Filipinos hold beliefs about illness that fit a general conceptualization of balance. Nydegger indicates that some Filipinos believe disease may be caused by a sorcerer who, through magical means, causes a poison or noxious substance to be introduced into the body, thus disturbing its normal equilibrium.[26]

Among some Latinos, health and disease are deemed to be consequences of God's approval or disapproval of one's behavior.[27] These Latinos are strongly influenced by their Roman Catholic religious orientation, which leads them to believe God is the source of health.[28] Good health, therefore, is seen as a gift from God and should not be taken lightly.[29] When illness does strike, their beliefs about its cause tend to reflect their religious beliefs. A fractured leg resulting from a fall, for instance, may be perceived as God's warning of future penalties for disobeying divine laws.[30]

One of the oldest and most widespread superstitions regarding the cause of illness is the *evil eye*, which is the belief that someone can project harm by gazing or staring at another. Belief in the power of the evil eye exists in many parts of the world, such as Southern Europe, the Middle East, and North America. Many ideas about the power of the evil eye were carried to the United States by immigrant populations where "these beliefs have persisted and may be quite strong among newer immigrants and heritage-consistent peoples."[31]



IMAGINE THIS

A ten-year-old boy from a rural Mexican family was being treated for cancer of his distal femur. According to the boy's father, his son's cancer began when the boy was kicked by a child from a neighboring family with whom the father had been feuding. The father believed that his neighbors had cast an evil spell, causing a snake to invade his son, and thus the child had developed an illness as a result of the kick. Because of the father's beliefs that there was a supernatural cause for his son's illness, he also believed that the evil spell would have to be removed before the boy could be cured.[32]

1. *Do the attending physicians have an obligation to work with the father in order to help remove the evil spell?*
2. *What resources do you believe the physicians would have available to them to help the father ward off the evil spell?*
3. *To what extent might the father's beliefs interfere with the cancer treatment?*
4. *What do you believe the physicians attending the boy could do to relieve the father's anxiety about his son's treatment?*

TREATMENT OF ILLNESS

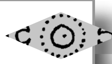
In the supernatural/magico/religious tradition, treatment involves achieving a positive association with spirits, deities, and so forth.[33] Treatment is carried out by healer-practitioners recognized by their communities as shamans. Depending on the culture, these healers may be called medicine men, kahunas, *curanderos*, *santeros*, or simply spirit healers. The word "shaman," derived from an ancient Siberian language, means "spirit healer," and denotes one who works with supernatural entities. Shamanism is found today in many parts of the globe among people who live by mystical participation or a sense of spiritual connection that they believe exists between everyone and everything in the universe. Shamanism is neither a religion nor a science, but an activity that takes place in a world that is ordinary yet spiritual. It can be viewed as a healing or helping technology—the technology of the sacred—instead of a set of beliefs or customs.[34]

Generally, shamans seem to invoke powers that are greater than the ordinary physical powers found in everyday life. The powers of a shaman may include the hands-on power to heal by removing harmful spirit stuff from the body and restoring the body's energy; the visionary power to see into the body of a sick person; and the power to retrieve the lost soul or spirit of the sick. Shamanism may also provide a spiritual connection with animals, and the ability to elicit help from animal spirits. It may include the ability to sense the presence of one's ancestors or other friendly dead who have come to give help.[35]

Many Asians—including Laotians, Hmong, and Vietnamese—as well as many people from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Brazil seek treatments intended to induce evil influences to leave the afflicted person. One such treatment, called "cupping," is used to drive out evil influences and cure illness. Cupping involves the healer placing a heated glass upside down on the chest or back of the sick person and pulling it off after it has cooled and formed a vacuum. Another common treatment practiced by some Asians is called "spooning" or "coining." In the spooning treatment, a spoon is rubbed vigorously back and forth across the patient's body, most often on the back and the back of the neck. Coining involves the use of a coin about the size of a quarter, rather than a spoon, which is rubbed on the back of the neck, the stomach, the chest, the upper arms, and even along the forehead and temples. Cupping, spooning, and coining are practices that are believed to "rub out" evil winds and spirits. They may, however, leave visible marks on the patient.

The Hmong also use folk healers to cure illness. These healers or shamans enter the spiritual world by chanting, and summon good spirits who diagnose illness and dictate treatment to be carried out by the shamans. For members of the lu-Mein culture of Laos and Thailand, healing treatments may

IMAGINE THIS



You are a teacher in an American middle school. One day you notice that one of your Vietnamese students has bruise-like marks on her arms, legs, neck, and face. You are a culturally competent teacher working in a multicultural environment and have learned about the practices of cupping, spooning, and coining as folk treatments for illness. Yet, the laws of your state mandate that you report any suspicion of child abuse to Child Protective Services, which has the authority to remove children from their homes if they suspect abuse.

What action would you take?

involve elaborate sacred ceremonies that require the sacrifice of a pig or chicken by a shaman in order to feed hungry spirits.[36]

Korean folk medicine follows the practice of *hanyak,* which has its roots in ancient Chinese medicine. *Hanyak* practice involves diagnosing imbalances in the body that are believed to cause illness and then prescribing appropriate natural remedies, usually in the form of drugs derived from herbs that restore the body's ability to maintain its balance.[37]

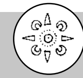
The Korean concept of bodily balance is derived from the notion of opposites that complement each other (often referred to as *yin* (-) and *yang* (+)). Light complements dark; day complements night, male complements female, etc. This theory is extended to the body, where various organs are associated with the five basic elements of the world—fire, water, wood, metal, and earth—and must be kept in proper balance. Kidneys, for instance, are associated with water, the liver with wood, and the heart with fire. A *hanyak* practitioner who has arrived at a diagnosis of a disease will prescribe from a wide and varied *hanyak* pharmacopoeia. The drugs are taken from roots, flowers, leaves, and vines, which are sources of many of the drugs used today in Western medicine. Quinine, for example, is an ancient Eastern drug that has been adopted in the West to treat malaria.[38]

Many people from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Brazil believe in *Santeria* (a type of religion). According to Dresser, when someone of this belief becomes sick, a *santero* is contacted who consults an *Orisha* (saint-like deity) to assist in the cure. Similarly, according to Galanti, it is not uncommon for Haitians to consult voodoo priests and priestesses for treatments that can involve candles, baths, charms, and spirit visits. Within the United States, some groups, particularly African Americans, rely on pica—ingestion of nonfood substances—to treat illness. For example, an individual may eat laundry starch to "build up the blood" after an auto accident.[39] And, as Grossman relates:

> Cubans may use traditional medicinal plants in the form of teas, potions, salves, or poultices. In the Little Havana community of Miami, *botanicas* sell a variety of herbs, ointments, oils, powders, incenses, and religious figurines to relieve maladies, bring good luck, drive away evil sprits, or break curses.[40]

The Embera people of Panama also approach healing as botanicalists. Each village maintains a small garden of plants used for healing. If the local healer is unable to effect a cure, a tribal elder with greater botanical expertise may be consulted for additional help. If these healing practices do not work, a healer called a shaman is consulted; he or she then treats the spiritual aspects of the ill individual. If the shaman is unable to effect a cure, as a last resort there may be some consultation with biomedical physicians outside the tribal society.

Cultural beliefs can have a powerful influence on a patient's relationship with pain. Mexican women, for instance, have been known to refuse an epidural during childbirth because they (and their husbands) believe pain



REMEMBER THIS

The supernatural tradition comes from a belief system in which the world is perceived as an arena filled with magic, sorcery, and evil spirits. Illness is attributed to evil spiritual forces. Treatment is carried out by healers who invoke special powers to cast out the evil forces.

is a normal part of becoming a mother.[41] Filipinos view pain as a part of living an honorable life and as an opportunity to attain a fuller spiritual life and atone for past transgressions, which leads them to appear stoic and able to tolerate a high degree of pain. Miranda, McBride, and Spangler suggest, therefore, that health care providers must recognize this mind-set, offer pain-relief medication, and encourage its use when treating a Filipino who does not complain of pain.[42]

Holistic Tradition

UNDERLYING PREMISES

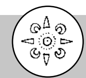
The earth is made up of systems, such as air, land, water, plants and animals. Holistic health is based on the principle that a whole is made up of interdependent, interacting parts. In the same way, an individual is a whole made up of interdependent parts, which are known as physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. If life is to be sustained, these parts cannot be separated, because what is happening to one system is also felt by all of the other systems. When one part is not working at its best, it affects all of the other parts of that person. Furthermore, this whole person, including all of his or her parts, is in constant interaction with everything in the surrounding environment. For example, when an individual is anxious about an exam or an employment interview, his or her nervousness may result in a physical reaction such as a headache or a stomachache. When someone suppresses anger over a long period, he or she often develops a serious illness such as migraine headaches, emphysema, or arthritis.[43]

Holistic health is about more than just not being sick.[44] It is actually an approach to life. Rather than focusing on a specific illness or specific parts of the body, holism is concerned with the connection of mind, body, and spirit and how persons interact with their environment. The goal is to achieve maximum well-being, where everything is functioning in the very best way possible. With holistic health, people accept responsibility for their own level of well-being, and everyday choices are used to take charge of one's own health.[45]

CAUSES

Holistic or naturalistic approaches to the cause of illness assume there are natural laws that govern everything and every person in the universe. For people to be healthy, they must remain in harmony with nature's laws and willingly adjust and adapt to changes in their environment.[46]

In reviewing beliefs about holistic causes among Asian cultures, Giger and Davidhizar suggest that many people of Asian origin (Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, Japanese, and Southeast Asians) do not believe they have control over nature. They possess a fatalistic perspective in which people must adjust to the physical world rather than controlling or changing the environment.[47]

REMEMBER THIS 

Believers in a holistic approach to health care generally believe there is a connective relationship between the mind, body, and spirit.

Traditional Mexican and Puerto Rican medical beliefs are derived from the Greek humoral theory that specifies four humors of the body: "blood—hot and wet; yellow bile—hot and dry; phlegm—cold and wet; and black bile—cold and dry."[48] An imbalance of one of the four body humors is seen as a cause of illness.[49]

Spector posits that people of African, Haitian, or Jamaican origin also frequently view illness as a result of disharmony with nature.[50] According to Muller and Steyn, traditional African perceptions of illness include both personalistic and naturalistic causes. In this context, *personalistic* means that the illness is caused by purposeful intervention of an agent such as a superhuman being, and *naturalistic* means that there are natural causes for the illness, such as infection or organic deterioration, which can be treated symptomatically.[51] Haitians also believe that both natural events, such as viral infections, and unnatural events, such as spells, curses, magic, and evil people, can cause others to become ill.[52]

Although there are many American Indian tribes and all have somewhat different worldviews, there is enough similarity among them to allow us to make some valid generalizations. You are cautioned, however, that these are indeed generalizations, and you will easily find exceptions to what we say. First, we can generalize that American Indians consider the earth "to be a living organism—the body of a higher individual, with a will and a desire to be well. For them, ill health is something that must be."[53] Spector says that the American Indian belief system maintains that a person should respect his or her body, just as the earth should be treated with respect. American Indians believe in a reciprocal relationship whereby if the earth is harmed, humankind itself is harmed, and "conversely, when humans harm themselves they harm the earth. The earth gives food, shelter, and medicine to humankind, and for this reason, all things of the earth belong to human beings and nature."[54]

American Indian views on the causes of illness have also been investigated by Boyd, who explains:

> Many American Indians with traditional orientations believe there is a reason for every sickness or pain. They believe that illness is the price to be paid either for something that happened in the past or for something that will happen in the future . . . Everything is seen as being the result of something else, and this cause-and-effect relationship creates an eternal chain. Some American Indians do not subscribe to the germ theory of modern medicine. Illness is something that must be. Even the person who is experiencing the illness may not realize the reason for its occurrence, but it may, in fact, be the best possible price to pay for the past or future event(s).[55]

As you can see, the holistic worldview results in multiple approaches to understanding the causes of illness and a variety of ways of treating illness.

TREATMENT OF ILLNESS

Holistic/naturalistic treatments are found in some Chinese medical practices. For example, Chinese medicine seeks to restore the balance between the yin and yang forces, which we mentioned earlier. Matocha explains this process in the following paragraph:

> The Chinese believe that health and a happy life can be maintained if the two forces of the yang and the yin are balanced. The hollow organs (bladder, intestines, stomach, and gallbladder), head, face, back, and lateral parts of the body are the yang. The solid viscera

> (heart, lung, liver, spleen, kidney, and pericardium), abdomen, chest, and the inner parts of the body are the yin. The yin is cold and the yang is hot. Health care providers need to be aware that the functions of life and the interplay of these functions, rather than the structures, are important to Chinese.[56]

Traditional methods of holistic treatment among the Chinese include ingesting thousand-year-old eggs, following strict rules governing food combinations, and eating specific foods before and after life events such as childbirth and surgery. Traditional cures include acupuncture, which is an ancient practice of applying needles to the body to cure diseases or relieve pain; moxibustion, which is a therapy based on the value of heat; and herbal remedies, such as ginseng, which are used widely by Chinese as well as by many Westerners. Exercise is important, and many Chinese participate in formal exercise programs such as *tai chi*.

The Chinese are apt to self-medicate if they believe they know what is wrong or have been successfully treated by medicine or herbs in the past.[57] They also may rely on fortune-tellers to determine auspicious times to perform scheduled surgeries or other medical procedures.

Mexican folk medicine, which can be traced back to sixteenth-century Spain, is a common form of treating illness in Mexico. It looks beyond symptoms of illness and seeks to locate imbalances in an individual's relationship with the environment, negative emotional states, and harmful social, spiritual, and physical factors. When one becomes ill, folk healers use foods and herbs to restore the desired balance. A hot disease is treated with cold or cool foods. A cold disease is treated by hot foods. *Hot* and *cold* do not refer to the temperature of the foods, but to their intrinsic nature. Hot foods include chocolate, garlic, cinnamon, mint, and cheese. Cold foods include avocados, bananas, fruit juice, lima beans, and sugarcane.[58]

Among some Mexicans and Mexican Americans, folk healers are frequently consulted to treat illness. According to Burke, Wieser, and Keegan, three kinds of folk healers are found in Mexico: *curanderos*, *yerberos*, and *sobadors*.

> *Curanderos* (healers), believed to be chosen and empowered by God, are the most respected folk healers. . . . *Yerberos* (herbalists) specialize in the use of herbs and spices to treat and prevent illness. . . . *Sobadors* (masseuses) attempt to correct musculoskeletal imbalances through massage or manipulation.[59]

Not all holistic cultures subscribe to a specific approach to the treatment of illness. Some use both Western and indigenous methods. In Africa, for instance, the effects of colonialism, spirituality, and ancestral traditions affect native perceptions of health care. Many Africans differentiate health care into modern and traditional systems. Modern medicine follows the active biomedical model of Western medicine, while traditional medicine relies on folk healer practices. Depending on the type of illness, patients choose what they believe to be the most effective treatment.[60]

South African traditional healers have been classified into four categories: destructive and evil (wizards

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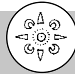


Folk healers in Mexico frequently treat patients by seeking to restore a balance between the person and his or her environment. When one is ill, treatment involves restoring a balance between hot and cold.

REMEMBER THIS

The holistic tradition is based on a balanced system of relationships between the body, mind, and spirit. Illness occurs when there is an imbalance between any of these aspects of the system. Cures are effected by restoring balance in the system.

and witches), diagnosticians or diviners (such as *sangomas* and smellers), therapeuticians (such as medicine men and herbalists), and specialists (such as rainmakers and disease specialists).[61] In South Africa, indigenous healers from these ancestral traditions have become an integral part of the health care system. The policy of the South African Department of Health, promulgated in 1997, is that traditional practitioners and birth attendants should be recognized as an important component of the broader primary health care team.[62]

In the United States, as Campinha-Bacote points out, many African Americans will draw upon their ancestral roots and utilize folk practitioners selected from among spiritual leaders, grandparents, elders of the community, or voodoo doctors or priests.[63]

Although some of these treatments may seem unusual or even bizarre from a Western perspective, health care practitioners in other cultures have successfully employed these methods for centuries.

Scientific/Biomedical Tradition

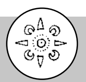
UNDERLYING PREMISES

The scientific/biomedical health care system focuses on the objective diagnosis and scientific explanation of disease.[64] It uses an evidence-based approach that relies on procedures such as laboratory tests to verify the presence and diagnosis of disease. Because this approach focuses on the physical causes of illness, it often does not take into account psychosocial aspects of illness such as cultural norms, coping abilities, and life events that may interact with physical health problems.[65] Andrews acknowledges that this paradigm supports the belief that "life is controlled by a series of physical and biochemical processes that can be studied and manipulated by humans. Human health is understood in terms of physical and chemical processes."[66] It is the dominant health-related belief system in the United States and the medical establishment promotes an almost exclusive belief in and reliance on it.[67] Most Western physicians and other health care providers are trained in this tradition.

This system disavows the metaphysical and usually ignores holistic approaches to medicine as well.[68] The scientific/biomedical health care system, as Luckmann relates, "is geared to conquer disease by battling the onslaught of microorganisms and diseased cells, as well as the breakdown of the body's organs due to aging."[69]

The strong, shared belief in the scientific/biomedical approach to health care has sometimes resulted in *Western biomedical ethnocentrism*, which can be a serious barrier to effective health care communication and result in a derisive response to a patient's use of or interest in alternative supernatural or holistic health practices. Even the term "alternative" indicates that these practices are perceived to lie outside accepted medical practices, and thus will be tolerated only if they do not interfere with the scientific/biomedical treatment plan.[70]

CAUSES OF ILLNESS

REMEMBER THIS 

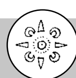
The Western scientific/biomedical worldview toward health holds that illness is caused by a break down in a patient's physical and chemical processes.

This tradition emphasizes biological concerns and is primarily interested in discovering abnormalities in the body's physical structure or its chemical functioning. Disease is believed to be present when a person's condition is seen to deviate from clearly established norms based on biomedical science. Luckmann believes that adherents of this approach view the model as "more 'real' and significant in contrast to psychological and sociological explanations of illness."[71]

TREATMENT OF ILLNESS

Treatments in this approach seek to destroy or remove the causative agent, repair the affected body part, or control the affected body system. Scientific/biomedical treatments are the dominant form of treatment in the United States as well as many Western countries. Treatments which attempt to return the body to its normal state include surgery, medications, or other therapeutic interventions that destroy or remove the cause of illness. In this approach, surgery, chemotherapy, or radiation may be employed to battle cancer. Antibiotics may be prescribed to destroy illness-causing bacteria and antiviral medications may be administered to treat viral infections. In some cases, nutritional supplements such as vitamins and minerals may be prescribed to help return the body to its normal state.

In the United States, as elsewhere, members of some co-cultures may subscribe to a combination of beliefs about appropriate treatment and seek the scientific/biomedical tradition for some illnesses while embracing the supernatural/magico/religious or holistic forms for others. As Giger and Davidhizar point out, many Chinese Americans use both Western and Chinese medical services.[72] Some Vietnamese may not seek scientific/biomedical treatment until they have exhausted their own resources. But, as Nowak notes, once a Western-oriented physician or nurse has been consulted, Vietnamese patients are usually quite cooperative and respect the wisdom and experience of biomedical practitioners.[73]

REMEMBER THIS 

The scientific/biomedical approach focuses on objective diagnosis and scientific explanation of disease. It is interested in discovering and fixing abnormalities in the physical structure or chemical functioning of the body. Treatment attempts to return the body to its normal state through surgery or therapeutic interventions.

Many Filipinos are familiar with and accept Western medicine, although some Filipinos accept the efficacy of folk medicine and may consult with both Western-trained and indigenous healers.[74] Also, according to Chong, "Educated Latinos generally subscribe to the biomedical model of health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease."[75] Jewish Americans usually follow scientific/biomedical treatment protocols, but

their treatment may necessitate adjustment because of religious requirements. For instance, as Selekman indicates, if an Orthodox Jew's condition is not life threatening, medical and surgical procedures should not occur on the Sabbath or holy days such as Yom Kippur.[76]

Cultural Diversity in the Prevention of Illness

Diverse cultural beliefs regarding the causes and treatments of illness have led to a variety of methods to deal with the prevention of illness. Unlike approaches to the causes and treatment of illness, which rely on systematic methods, many cultures employ a combination of supernatural, holistic, and scientific/biomedical approaches to prevent illness. In the United States and other highly technological cultures, good health is based on the ideals of annual physical examinations, immunizations at specified times, exercise, and good nutrition. Yet many people also follow preventive health regimens that may include stress-reducing massage and meditation as well as the ingestion of probiotic bacteria and a variety of "natural" herbs to stimulate sexual performance, prevent or reduce memory loss, or promote energy. In addition, they may seek preventive treatment from such health care practitioners as chiropractors, acupuncturists, or colonic irrigationists.

In sharp contrast, many Muslim Afghanis rely on the Koran to protect them from illness. In a practice called *ta' wiz*, Koranic verses known as *shuist* or *dudi* are written on paper, wrapped in cloth, and worn by babies and the ill. Dressler reports that *shuist* verses may be written on paper, and then soaked in water that is subsequently drunk. *Dudi* verses might be written on paper and burned with greasy oil close to the patient so the smoke will kill germs and ward off evil spirits.[77]

Latino and Asian cultures believe that illness may be prevented by maintaining a "hot-cold" balance. In both cultures, hot conditions are maintained with cold therapies and cold conditions are maintained with hot therapies. Any hot-cold imbalance is believed to foster disease. For example, a mother might stop giving her child vitamins (a hot treatment) if the child gets a rash (a hot condition). And, some Asian patients might believe that germs play a role in disease, but that hot-cold imbalances make a person susceptible to illness.[78]

Many members of Mexican and Puerto Rican cultures, Giger and Davidhizar report, "believe that health may be the result of good luck or a reward from God for good behavior."[79] Consequently, they frequently depend on a variety of amulets or charms, often inscribed with magic symbols or sayings, to protect the wearer from disease or evil. Candles, herbs, crystals, statues of saints, shells, and herbal teas also are used to provide protection.

Many members of the Laotian culture seek to prevent ill health by the use of a *Baci* ceremony of prayers and good wishes during pregnancy, birth, marriage, a change of location, illness, or surgery. Family members, including a *mor phorn* or wish priest, engage in group prayers while gathered around an altar of candles, incense, rice, folded banana leaves, holy water, flowers, and strings.[80] The Chinese, says Spector, often prepare amulets to ward off evil spirits and to protect their health.

> The amulets consist of a charm with an idol or Chinese character painted in red or black ink and written on a strip of yellow paper. These amulets are hung over doors or pasted on walls. They may be worn in the hair or placed in a red bag and pinned on clothing.

Jade charms are particularly important because many Chinese perceive jade as the giver of children, health, immortality, wisdom, power, victory, growth, and food.[81]

Some cultures believe that violating cultural taboos can lead to illness. An example of this is found among several American Indian cultures, whose members believe cutting a child's hair may cause the child to become sick and die. This belief can even extend to procedures on the child's head, such as stitches that require removal of the hair. The only way to prevent the death of the child is to counteract the violation of the taboo by attaching a medicine bundle to the child's chest.[82] In a similar manner, as Galanti explains, pregnant Hmong women ensure the health of their children by paying close attention to food cravings. It is their belief, for example, that if a woman "craved ginger and failed to eat it, her child will be born with an extra finger or toe.[83]

In our discussion about preventing and curing illness, we have examined some of the diverse ways in which cultures seek to prevent illness. In addition, there are some cultures and co-cultures whose members may delay seeking preventive health care, may believe that the cure for their illnesses must be found within themselves, or may not attempt prevention at all.

Gay men and lesbians, for instance, generally have lower rates of seeking preventive health care than the general population. Lesbians are less likely than are women in the general population to receive cancer-screening services such as mammography or Pap tests. Likewise, gay men are less likely to seek preventive health care than their heterosexual counterparts.[84] This reluctance may be due, in part, to societal homophobic views, which prompt gay men and lesbians to keep their sexual identity secret. Many lesbians and gay men report difficulty in communicating with their primary care provider, which causes delays in seeking health care.[85] The hesitancy to seek preventive health care may be found in other cultures as well. Such a tendency is expressed eloquently by a Yugoslavian proverb that says, "good thoughts are half of health." This proverb implies that the act of thinking good thoughts wards off illness, thus reducing the need to seek preventive health care.

Our examination of explanations, treatments, and prevention of illness indicates that what a patient believes can strongly affect the treatment process. While some of these health care beliefs and practices may seem strange or even primitive to you, remember that many cultures have not yet experienced the technological and economic benefits now common in Western society. As a result, these less-developed societies have little choice but to rely on traditional health care customs that at times might be harmful. However, Western medicine, like the Western media, is rapidly reaching more people worldwide. As a consequence, many of the cultures we have discussed, while still adhering to their traditional health care practices, are becoming aware of and adapting Western scientific/biomedical approaches, either alone or in conjunction with traditional cultural practices, in the treatment of some illnesses.

Having discussed the impact of diverse belief systems on the causes, treatment, and prevention of illness, we now turn to a discussion of how to gain intercultural competence in the health care environment.

Intercultural Health Care Competence

One of the major themes of this chapter has been that health care delivery in the United States can be hindered by cultural diversity, lack of knowledge about that diversity, and an inability to communicate effectively. Marquand recognizes this problem by saying,

Being sensitive to and considering a patient's culture is essential to providing satisfactory health care.

"With the rising cultural diversity of individuals entering the United States comes increasing diversity in the health care beliefs and practices of those seeking health care."[86] In dealing with this diversity, agreeable ways of caring for all members of society must be discovered and practiced. Spector adds to this theme:

> In many situations, this is not difficult; in other situations, it seems impossible . . . [T]he needs most difficult to meet are those of people whose belief systems are most different from the "mainstream" health-care provider culture.[87]

In health care, culture intervenes at every step of the process.[88] Qureshi highlights the need to recognize the importance of culture in providing satisfactory health care:

> Ignorance of culture can lead to false diagnosis. Only by taking a full history and being sensitive to a patient's culture can a doctor make an accurate diagnosis, understand the patterns of illness in various ethnic groups, and isolate diseases which may or may not be specific to a particular ethnic group.[89]

Thus, in order to achieve a goal of optimal health care for all in the multicultural United States, health care providers and institutions must be culturally competent.

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence is generally defined as "the knowledge, motivation, and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures."[90] A culturally competent health care system is, therefore, composed of interrelated components that (1) acknowledge the importance of culture, (2) make assessments of intercultural relations, (3) maintain vigilance toward the dynamics that result from cultural diversity, (4) utilize the expansion of cultural knowledge, and (5) adapt its services to meet culturally unique patient needs. This system also recognizes the integration and interaction of health beliefs and behaviors, disease prevalence and incidence, and treatment outcomes for different cultures.[91]

ATTRIBUTES OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

A competent intercultural health care system is composed of easily identifiable attributes. Rosenjack Burchum has identified five such attributes: (1) cultural awareness, (2) cultural knowledge, (3) cultural understanding, (4) cultural sensitivity, and (5) cultural skill.[92] When applied to such health care settings as a physician's office, clinic, or hospital, Anderson, Scrimshaw, and Fullilove believe that intercultural competence must include an appropriate mix of the following attributes:

1. A culturally diverse staff that reflects the cultures served
2. Providers or interpreters who speak the patients' language(s)

Robert Fonseca

Health care professionals need excellent intercultural communication skills.

3. Training for providers about the culture and language of the people they serve
4. Signage and instructional literature in the patients' language(s) and consistent with their cultural norms
5. Culturally specific health care settings[93]

Defining intercultural competence and noting its attributes does not, however, alleviate the problems of caregiving in a multicultural setting. Betancourt has wisely counseled, "Cultural competence is not a panacea that will single-handedly improve health outcomes and eliminate disparities, but a necessary set of skills for physicians who wish to deliver high-quality care to all patients. If we accept this premise, we will see cultural competence as a movement that is not marginal, but mainstream"[94]

Developing Intercultural Competence

Although the education of health care professionals currently provides some training in cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication, the primary responsibility for becoming culturally competent lies with practitioners. In other words, health care providers must take a proactive stance and develop sensitivity to the role culture plays in health care. It is very important, therefore, that providers not only learn about other cultures but know their own culture as well.

KNOW YOUR OWN CULTURE

People's perceptions and understanding of what constitute health and health care are developed through their social acculturation. Thus, his or her thinking about health and health care is shaped by their cultural experiences.[95] In the United States, health care providers—physicians, nurses, social workers, dietitians, laboratory and departmental professionals—are socialized into the culture of their profession and for the most part are educated in the Western scientific/biomedical worldview. This professional socialization, Spector says, teaches practitioners to hold and accept a set of beliefs, practices, habits, likes, dislikes, norms, and rituals.[96] Therefore, before providers can develop an adequate knowledge about other cultures, they must be aware of their own beliefs and realize how they affect their ability to look at, understand, and appreciate other belief systems.

GAIN KNOWLEDGE OF CO-CULTURES

The more you know about someone's health care beliefs or practices, the better your care and treatment plans can take into account your patient's worldview. Multicultural experience can enhance medical providers' ability to communicate with patients from cultures different from their own.[97] Consequently, health care in a multicultural environment must focus on the cultural beliefs and lifestyles of diverse groups and apply this knowledge to achieve culturally appropriate patient care.

In multicultural health care situations, health care providers must respect rather than dismiss traditional practices that affect patients' acceptance of, and compliance with, treatment protocols. Caregivers should respectfully explore a patient's beliefs within the context of the patient's religion and culture. Juckett says caregivers also must recognize that some immigrant patients transitioning between cultural belief systems may hold several viewpoints simultaneously.[98]

Because the belief perspectives of both provider and patient are influenced by the social and cultural factors that define each person, different worldviews can undermine the trust and cooperation necessary for a successful healing and therapeutic relationship.[99] These social and cultural differences are a challenge that, if not handled correctly, will adversely affect the clinical interaction. Thus, when working in

REMEMBER THIS

Anderson, Scrimshaw, and Fullilove suggest four things that should be considered in intercultural health care interactions:

1. *Does the patient value individuality and personal choice, or does the patient focus more on family and collective choices?*
2. *Does the patient value open communication or does the patient tend to draw cues from the context of the situation?*
3. *Does the patient believe people can and should influence their health?*
4. *Does the patient believe in a Western biomedical view of illness, or does the patient hold an alternative or blended view of illness?*[104]

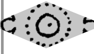
Although the above questions are not exhaustive, they do illustrate a way to obtain the kind of knowledge you will need to provide effective health care.

a multicultural environment, the first step is to understand the beliefs of the patient and his or her family, especially toward treatment goals. The next step is to identify a treatment plan that is acceptable to the patient, the family, and the health care team. Concern about the family is important because in many cultures health care decisions are not made by the individual patient but by the family as a team.

For the Western-oriented health care provider, biomedical information is usually of primary concern, sometimes to the exclusion of everything else. A provider, say Rundle, Carvalho, and Robinson, may not appreciate a family's reliance on a shaman or spiritual healer. It is essential to remember that a patient's, and his or her family's, perception and understanding of the origin and meaning of well-being, illness, and recovery can be major factors in the health care process.[100]

The delivery of satisfying health care to culturally diverse patients requires that their beliefs concerning the causes of illness, how illness should be treated, and how it can be prevented in the future must be acknowledged. Galanti makes much the same point when he writes, "Even in cases where Western scientific medicine is superior, if the patient believes it is insufficient for treating the problem, it probably will be."[101] He clearly illustrates this in the following narrative:

> An eighty-three-year-old Cherokee Indian woman was brought to a hospital emergency room after she passed out at home. X-rays revealed a bowel obstruction that required surgery. The woman refused to sign the consent form because she first wanted to see the medicine man on the reservation. At the request of the social worker, the woman's grandson drove to the reservation and returned with the medicine man in full traditional dress. He conducted a healing ceremony complete with bells, rattles, chanting, and singing for forty-five minutes. At the end of the ceremony, the medicine man indicated that the woman was ready to sign the consent form. She did, and her immediate surgery was uneventful and without complications.[102]



IMAGINE THIS

A physician who had been taking care of a Native American family for about five years noticed that the wife was depressed. The wife slowly revealed that she had been sexually assaulted by her uncle when she was young. The doctor started her on psychotherapy and antidepressants, which helped her but did not solve the underlying problems. After consulting with an American Indian medicine man, who then met with the family, the physician and the patient learned that the woman had acquired a bad spirit from the incest. A traditional purification ceremony was performed that released the woman from both the bad spirit and her depression.[105]

1. *In what manner does this narrative illustrate cultural competence?*
2. *How does this illustrate the joining of Western biomedical and traditional healing methods?*
3. *Why do you suspect this combination of healing belief systems was successful?*

The most effective way to address cultural differences is through open and balanced communication. The clinical situation is perhaps best conceptualized as a negotiation. When health care workers are unsure of a patient or family situation, it is best to simply ask.[103]

We have described some of the cultural factors than can impede effective health care communication. Now, we want to call your attention to a number of specific communication strategies that can be used to engage in effective interaction with culturally diverse patients.

Health Care Communication Strategies

A communication strategy is a model or guide you can follow to help create effective messages for specific purposes. Health care communication strategies offer advice or suggestions about gaining insight into a patient's background and health care beliefs. Strategies are also valuable in helping overcome barriers to effective communication between caregivers and patients.

In any intercultural communication situation, there will be structural barriers to effective communication. Luckmann identifies eight such barriers that can occur in the health care setting: (1) lack of knowledge about the patient's background and beliefs, (2) patient fear and distrust of caregivers, (3) racism, (4) bias and ethnocentrism on the part of both caregivers and recipients, (5) mutual stereotyping, (6) ritualistic behavior, (7) language differences, and (8) differences in perceptions and expectations.[106] We now will set forth a number of general strategies that you can follow to create messages that will help you overcome these barriers.

1. *Do not treat the patient in the same manner in which you would want to be treated.* Culture determines the rules for polite, caring behavior, and consequently, will determine the patient's concept of a satisfactory relationship.[107]

2. *Begin an interaction by being more formal with patients who were born in another culture.* In many international cultures, there is a greater social distance between caregiver and patient. It is best to maintain this formal relationship until such time as the patient signals a different relationship is appropriate. It is best to address patients by their last name.[108]

3. *Allow patients to be open and honest.* Often, patients are reluctant to tell Western caregivers that they are visiting a folk healer or are taking alternative medication concurrently with Western treatment.[109]

4. *Do not discount the possible effects of beliefs in the supernatural on the patient's health.* If patients believe that thier illness has been caused by bewitchment, the evil eye, or punishment, they might not take any responsibility for their cure.[110]

5. *Inquire indirectly about the patient's belief in or use of nontraditional cures.* A question could be phrased in a form such as, "Many of my patients from your country visit shamans when ill. Do you?"[111]

6. *Never try to force change or demand compliance from patients.* In instances where the safety of the patient is a primary concern, the health care provider should decide which instructions the patient must follow and then be prepared to negotiate with them on less crucial issues.[112]

7. *Employ empathy in constructing your messages*. Gibson and Zhong indicate that patients often visit health care providers at a very vulnerable time in their lives. A visit to a physician frequently means that a patient has exhausted all attempts to care for him- or herself at home.[113] Thus, the health care provider must construct messages that address this vulnerability and offer reassurance. Luckman specifies that you must ". . . recognize the individuality of each client, regardless of culture."[114] The expression of pain, anxiety, fear, and other emotions may differ among people from diverse cultures. Thus, caregivers must empathically determine their patients' views and beliefs in order to accurately decode both their verbal and nonverbal communication.[115]

8. *Be restrained in relating bad news*. The patient's "need to know everything" is an American trait. Watch for and respect signs that patients have learned as much as they are able to deal with. In many cultures, medical decision making involves both the patient and the immediate family. The family may choose to deliver bad news gradually. For instance, a heart attack patient may be told at first that he or she merely fainted.[116]

9. *Follow the patient's lead in communication style*. If unaware of the patient's cultural rules about communication, the health care professional should observe how the patient communicates and follow suit.[117] Luckman offers five techniques that will help you follow the patient's lead:

   - If the patient does not look you in the eyes when speaking, do not look the patient in the eyes. Instead, direct your gaze to wherever the patient is looking.
   - Speak in the same manner as the patient. If he or she speaks slowly and softly, speak the same way.
   - Mirror the patient's handshake; apply the same pressure as he or she does, rather than firmly squeezing his or her hand.
   - If a patient lets a family member answer questions, defer to the family member and permit him or her to answer the questions.
   - Observe the patient's physical comfort zone for interpersonal communication. If the patient moves closer to you while engaged in conversation, do not back away and move out of the patient's comfort zone.[118]

10. *Make use of the* ***LEARN*** *model*. Luckman has adapted a model that lists a series of things to do when interacting with a patient from a different culture.

    - **L**isten and ask questions to assess which words the patient uses to describe his or her illness, as well as what the patient believes is causing the illness.
    - **E**xplain (using simple terms) what the patient needs to understand about his or her illness. Also, explain the reasons for any required interventions.
    - **A**cknowledge that the patient's views may differ from your own. Western health care providers will probably adhere to the biomedical model of care, whereas the patient may believe in another model. Take care not to devalue the patient's views.
    - **R**ecommend what the patient should do. For example, help him or her practice drawing insulin or changing a dressing.
    - **N**egotiate with the patient and adapt recommendations to the patient's views and daily patterns. Have the patient assume some control over aspects of the therapeutic plan.[119]

Although there are numerous additional strategies that can be employed when creating messages in the health care setting, those offered here should prove effective in

REMEMBER THIS

The acronym LEARN stands for Learn, Explain, Acknowledge, Recommend, and Negotiate.

the majority of communication situations. The role of language is another culturally diverse dynamic that we need to consider. In the next section, we will discuss how language diversity affects health care communication.

LANGUAGE AND HEALTH CARE

Language Diversity

The sundry complexities of language were considered in Chapter 6; but the role of language diversity in the health care setting needs to be explored here because language errors can lead to life-threatening situations. Elgin offers this description of language complexities:

> Human languages around the world present very different models of what health and illness/injury/disability and medical care are, depending on the metaphors the language uses for these items and all their related phenomena. The range in medical models encoded in human languages around the world stretches from "All health problems are caused by evil spirits and bad thoughts" through "All health problems are punishments for sin" to "All health problems are caused by germs" and far beyond.[120]

It is obvious that language differences can complicate medical interactions. How, for instance, does a young Latina woman who speaks no English explain to a medical team in a hospital emergency ward that the liquid drops she put into her baby's mouth (which were intended for the baby's ears) have made her child worse? Think for a moment about the potential for confusion if a Western doctor speaks of a woman's "period" to someone whose culture does not use this metaphor. Similarly, a patient's literal translation of the phrase "have your tubes tied" may lead to an understanding that the tubes can just as easily be "untied." Medical situations resulting from such miscommunication can be detrimental to the patient.

The use of medical jargon can also complicate health care interactions. For example, the use of words like *rhinitis* rather than hay fever, *anosmia* instead of loss of taste, and *dementia* rather than memory loss can be confusing to native English speakers and even more so to individuals who speak a different language. In addition, Witte and Morrison indicate, "it is sometimes difficult for members of diverse cultures to articulate their symptoms and feelings in a nonnative language."[121] As a result, only vague symptoms and generalized descriptions of health may be conveyed.

Words can have different meanings in the same language. In Mexico, the Spanish word *horita* means right now. In Puerto Rico, it means in an hour or so. This could cause confusion between two Spanish speakers who come from different countries. Similarly, "just now" in South Africa is the equivalent of "later" in the United States.[122] In Dutch, the word for "shower" is *douche*. In English, *douche* is related to a specific form of personal feminine hygiene and is sometimes considered an offensive term. A hospitalized

American male patient in a Dutch hospital might find himself just a bit disconcerted if his Dutch nurse announced, "It is time for your douche."[123]

Conducting Interviews

Interviews are the primary technique used by physicians and other caregivers to elicit information about the patient necessary to make a diagnosis, to determine what tests might be necessary, and to ultimately treat an illness. As we have just indicated, communicating with patients from different cultures is often complicated by language differences. Health care professionals face a far greater challenge when they must communicate with patients who have limited or no English language proficiency. Putsch[124] offers a list of recommendations for conducting effective cross-cultural health care interviews. These recommendations should be thoroughly integrated into the practices of medical interviewers.

- Unless you are thoroughly effective and fluent in the target language, always use an interpreter.
- Try to use an interpreter of the same gender as the patient, but avoid using family members in this role.
- Learn basic words and sentences in the target language; emphasize by repetition, and speak slowly but not loudly.
- Be patient. Careful interpretation often requires that long explanatory phrases be used.
- Do not ignore the patient or address his or her remarks through the interpreter as if the patient was not present.
- Return to an issue when you suspect a problem is present but receive a negative response to questions about it. Be sure the interpreter knows what is wanted.
- Use short questions and comments; avoid technical terminology and professional jargon like "workup."
- Use language that the interpreter can handle; avoid abstractions, idiomatic expressions, similes, and metaphors.
- Plan what to say ahead of time. Do not confuse the interpreter by backing up, rephrasing, or hesitating.

During a cross-cultural interview, the care provider should ask the patient a series of questions that will elicit the information necessary to provide effective treatment. Juckett has proposed the following questions:

1. What do you call the illness?
2. What do you think has caused the illness?
3. Why do you believe the illness started when it did?
4. How severe is the illness?
5. What kind of treatment do you think is necessary?
6. What are the most important results you hope to receive from this treatment?
7. What are the main problems the illness has caused you?

8. What do you fear most about the illness?
9. What treatments, if any, are you receiving, and are you using folk remedies?[125]

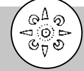
As you can see from the above discussion, conducting a cross-cultural health care interview is not an easy task. Until you overcome language barriers, your customary assessment and teaching skills will be seriously hampered, and the patient's care may be compromised.[126]

Employing Interpreters

There are at least three types of reasons for using a medical interpreter: (1) legal reasons, (2) quality-of-care reasons, and (3) financial reasons.[127] An interpreter is necessary if both the physician and the patient are not fluent in the same language. Interpreters may also assist in explaining cultural differences. Patients may be reluctant to reveal that they do not understand what the health care provider is saying. Gross misunderstanding between patients and health care professionals can lead to grave errors in diagnosis and treatment.[128]

Although family members may be the most convenient interpreters, Cole believes that "working with non-professional interpreters or family members is fraught with hazard. They may modify the questions we physicians ask out of their concern for privacy, or they may change the answer our patients provide for a variety of well-meaning reasons."[129] For example, a Mexican woman whose son usually interpreted for her suffered a great deal before the doctor discovered her actual problem—a fistula in her rectum. She was so embarrassed about her condition that she was reluctant to reveal her symptoms through her son. Only when a professional interpreter was called did she reveal her true symptoms.[130] Also, the use of a family member or friend as an interpreter may breach confidentiality laws, cause confusion because a family member or friend does not understand medical terminology, or make it difficult to assess sensitive issues such as sexuality and domestic violence. Whenever possible, a trained medical interpreter should be used.[131]

We have shown how health care can be compromised when provider and patient speak different languages. We have also tried to give you some insights into the problems associated with interviewing patients and using an interpreter. We now turn to one more health care situation where the provider must present bad news and deal not only with a patient whose illness is terminal, but with the patient's family as well.



THINK ABOUT THIS

Why is it not a good idea to use family members as interpreters? Think of several reasons. Under what circumstances might it be necessary to utilize a family member as an interpreter?

Death and Dying

As we noted in chapter 3 when we discussed religion, cultures have evolved many different ways to deal with the topic of death and dying. They range from active participation to ignoring the issue. However, in the health care professions, death cannot be ignored. Effective and timely communication helps patients and their families gather relevant health information about

significant threats to health and assists them in developing strategies for responding to those threats appropriately. Wright, Sparks, and O'Hair rightly note that "an increasing problem for providers is how to communicate health information that is bad news to patients."[132] We now turn our attention to the topic of how the news of this final act is transmitted.

The diversity in cultural beliefs about death and dying pose some troublesome problems for health care communication. The practice of Western health care reflects a belief in the importance, uniqueness, dignity, and sovereignty of each person, and the sanctity of each individual life. Accordingly, every person is legally entitled to patient autonomy and self-determination. Adhering to such beliefs assumes that the patient is always the best person to make health decisions. In non-Western cultures, however, the interdependence between patient and the family may override self-determination. Many non-Western cultures vest in the family or community the right to receive and disclose information, to make decisions, and to organize patient care.[133] Bowman and Singer believe that "these differences in perspective, when unacknowledged, can lead to a complete breakdown in communication."[134]

Making end-of-life decisions is often a painful and difficult process, both for caregivers and for the family of the patient. This process can only be intensified by cultural differences between physicians and their patients. When patients and health care workers have diverse cultural backgrounds, patients frequently want to follow their cultural belief systems, which can hinder effective communication.[135] Thus, the Western values of open disclosure of diagnostic information to the patient rather than the family, prioritizing individual autonomy, and promoting dying at home may not be shared by non-Western cultures.[136]

In terms of talking about death, there is a bias among Western physicians and other care providers toward being optimistic when talking to patients about life-threatening illnesses. Physicians sometimes feel that they will be perceived as "giving-up" on a patient if they talk about dying and thus will eliminate the patient's sense of hope, which could lead to depression.[137] Accordingly, the physician may not have a discussion with the patient about his or her beliefs and values concerning life and death. Discussion of these beliefs and values is important if the physician is to insure that a patient's wishes will ultimately be carried out. Therefore, a providers should fully consider the patients' goals and values when advising them.[138]

As we conclude, we again remind you of the primary motivation behind this chapter. Simply stated, an understanding of different cultural medical systems, communication styles, and individual beliefs will assist health care providers in becoming more attuned to the culturally based health expectations held by people whose cultural background is different from their own.

SUMMARY

- Culture and language diversity can cause problems in health care communication.
- Cultures differ in the ways they explain, treat, and prevent illness.
- Health belief systems can be divided into three categories—supernatural/magico-religious, holistic, and scientific/biomedical—each with their own set of underlying premises.
- Cultural diversity leads to differences in beliefs about the causes of illness.

- Because of cultural diversity, people hold varying beliefs about how to treat illness.
- The ways in which people try to prevent illness are culturally diverse.
- Health care practices must accommodate a culturally diverse population.
- It is necessary for health care providers in a multicultural environment to become interculturally competent.
- Intercultural competence requires that health care workers know not only their own culture but also the cultures of the patients they serve.
- Language diversity is a common problem in health care communication.
- An interpreter should be used when a practitioners are not fluent in the language of their patients.
- Family members and friends generally are not good interpreters because of their connection to the patient.
- Cultural diversity affects individual beliefs about death and dying, which can lead to conflicts between providers and families about communicating bad news to patients.

ACTIVITIES

1. Identify the differences that exist between your various beliefs about the causes, treatment, and prevention of illness and those of other cultures.
2. Examine your worldview and determine how important spirituality is to your health care.
3. Interview members of your local health care community and determine what communication problems they have encountered when interacting with patients from diverse cultures.
4. Interview people from other cultures and ask them if they have encountered communication problems when seeking health care.
5. Ask members of other cultures how they view death and dying. Try to determine the role religion plays in their belief system.

DISCUSSION IDEAS

1. What is necessary to achieve intercultural communication competence in the health care setting?
2. What training is necessary for health care providers to become effective intercultural communicators?
3. How does cultural diversity in language usage complicate the multicultural health care setting?
4. What policies should be in effect at a health care facility to determine when interpreters should be employed?
5. Why might it be important to incorporate more than one medical belief system into the treatment of patients in a multicultural health care setting?
6. What are some cultural differences in beliefs about death and dying? How do these different belief systems affect the manner in which caregivers relate to their patients?

CHAPTER 11

Venturing into a New Culture: Becoming Competent

No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive.

MAHATMA GANDHI

You cannot expect to achieve new goals or move beyond your present circumstance unless you change.

LES BROWN

Throughout this book, we have strived to help you gain the intercultural communication skills you will need in order to successfully live and work in a global society. In Chapter 1, we recognized that there is a likelihood that you will work for a transnational organization or one of its subsidiaries. Alternatively, you may become employed by an organization that serves a multicultural clientele. Your ability to work in a multicultural workforce and interact with people from other cultures, perhaps in other languages, will be a prerequisite to your success in multinational or multicultural organizations.

As an aspect of your employment, you may well find yourself posted to another country for an assignment that could last three or more years. However, even if you are not working abroad, if you work in a multinational company you may encounter co-workers from abroad who have been assigned to work in the United States. In this situation, with your knowledge of cultural diversity and your intercultural communication skills, you can be supportive as they adjust to their new work environment and to life in the United States.

In this final chapter, our goal is to provide you with some of the knowledge, orientations, and capabilities you will need when you find yourself venturing into a new culture. We will thus (1) discuss how to become a competent intercultural communicator, (2) offer you insight into the dynamics of entering into a new culture, (3) suggest ways to adapt to your new cultural environment, and (4) promote your development of an intercultural ethic.

Becoming a Competent Intercultural Communicator

We begin our discussion of intercultural communication competence with a caution: "Communication with the culturally different is frequently associated with adverse emotional responses leading to feelings of awkwardness and anxiety."[1] You must be prepared to meet the challenges of language differences, unfamiliar and perhaps strange customs and behaviors, and cultural variability in both verbal and nonverbal communication styles, to achieve success.[2] Our goal here is to lay before you the skills you must develop to become a competent intercultural communicator. We also mention that the level of competence you ultimately develop will be a matter of personal preference and can range from native-like communication skills, to acceptance in the host culture, to just surviving.[3] Before we move into specific techniques for developing intercultural communication competence, we will define intercultural communication competence and discuss five of its major components.

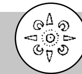
Intercultural Communication Competence

DEFINING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

We would agree with Spitzberg when he says that intercultural communication competence in its most unadorned form is simply "behavior that is appropriate and effective in a given context."[4] Kim offers a more detailed definition when she notes that intercultural communication competence is "the overall internal capability of an individual to manage key challenging features of intercultural communication: namely, cultural differences and unfamiliarity, inter-group posture, and the accompanying experience of stress."[5] What these two definitions tell you is that being a competent communicator means having the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with members of another linguistic-cultural background on their terms.[6]

COMPONENTS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

You should not be surprised to learn that such themes as empathy and being a good listener, which are associated with interpersonal communication competence, also emerge as characteristics of *intercultural* communication competence.[7] Most of the research in the area of intercultural communication competence reveals five components of competence that influence one's ability to interact effectively and appropriately in another culture. These are (1) motivation to communicate, (2) an appropriate fund of cultural knowledge, (3) appropriate communication skills,[8] (4) sensitivity, and (5) character. We will examine these five components as a general prelude to a detailed analysis of intercultural communication competence.



REMEMBER THIS

A competent intercultural communicator is one who has the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with members of another linguistic-cultural background on their terms.

Motivation. We begin this section on communication competence with what is perhaps the most important of all our suggestions and the simplest to state: *try to be motivated*. It is only logical and natural to assume that you are most motivated to interact with people who are close to you both physically and emotionally. Although this is a normal reaction, it often keeps you from trying to understand the experiences of people far removed from your personal sphere. We agree with Pittinsky, Rosenthal, and Montoya when they say that motivation as it relates to intercultural communication competence means that you possess a personal desire to improve your communication abilities.[9] Thus, as a motivated communicator, you show interest, make an effort to talk and understand, and extend help. Further, you show that you want to relate to others at a personal level and have an international perspective when interacting with people from diverse cultures.[10] For intercultural communication to be successful, you must be motivated to go beyond personal boundaries and attempt to learn about the experiences of people who are not part of your daily life. As anthropologist Jane Goodall reminds us, "The greatest danger to our future is apathy."

Knowledge. The knowledge component of intercultural communication competence means that you are self-aware and understand the rules, norms, and expectations associated with the culture of the people with whom you are interacting.[11] For instance, the need for knowledge as it applies to the health care professions is expressed here by Luckmann when she says, "Nurses who are not knowledgeable about cultural differences risk misinterpreting patients' attempts to communicate. As a result, patients may not receive the proper care."[12] Morreale, Spitzberg, and Barge indicate that you need two kinds of knowledge to be fully competent—content knowledge and procedural knowledge. "Content knowledge involves knowing what topics, words, meanings, and so forth are required in a situation. Procedural knowledge refers to knowing how to assemble, plan and perform content knowledge in a particular situation."[13] You need both forms of knowledge in order to determine appropriate communication strategies, what constitutes proper protocol, and what cultural customs need to be observed.

A. Ramey/PhotoEdit

Having motivation to communicate is an important first step in overcoming violence and conflict.

Skills. As a competent intercultural communicator you must be able to listen, observe, analyze, and interpret and apply these specific behaviors in a manner that enables you to achieve your goals.[14] Smith and Bond amplify this point when they indicate that skills need to be adapted to the rules of interaction that are appropriate to the host culture.[15] In actuality, you have been learning these skills all your life and thus can communicate effectively with members of your own culture. You should realize, however, that communication skills that are successful with one group might be inappropriate with other cultures.

While most of the literature dealing with communication competency includes only the three components we have just mentioned, two more features need to be added to the profile of a competent communicator. These attributes are sensitivity and character.

Sensitivity. Communication competence requires that the participants to an interaction be sensitive to one another and to the cultures represented in an interaction. *Sensitivity*, according to Pittinsky, Rosenthal and Montoya, involves being flexible, patient, empathic, curious about other cultures, open to diversity, and comfortable with others.[16] Spencer-Roberts and McGovern add that the sensitive communicator possesses a tolerance for ambiguity.[17] This means that when you encounter behaviors or customs that appear strange or unusual, you are not thrown off balance because you do not understand what may be happening, or disapprove of the custom or behavior. This leads to another thought by Pittinsky, Rosenthal and Montoya, who believe that the truly sensitive communicator must move beyond merely being tolerant of other people and other cultures and develop feelings of *allophila*, which is a liking for others and the behavior that liking inspires.[18]

Character. The idea behind including *character* is simple: if you are not perceived by your communication partner as a person of good character, your chances for success will be diminished. In many ways, your character is composed of both your personal history and how you exhibit that history. As the American philosopher and teacher P. B. Fitzwater noted, "Character is the sum and total of a person's choices." The key, of course, is how you act out those choices when you interact with someone from another culture. Perhaps the single most important trait associated with people of character is their trustworthiness. Traits often associated with the trustworthy person are honesty, respect, fairness, and the ability to make good choices,[19] as well as honor, altruism, sincerity, and goodwill.

Improving Your Intercultural Communication Skills

Although this entire book is aimed at helping you improve your intercultural communication skills, our suggestions, admonitions, counsel, and proposals in previous chapters have been only tangentially related to improvement. Our recommendations here will now be very specific. More importantly, all of these suggestions for improvement should enable you to exercise your ability to make choices. Our propositions place you in the center of the activity. Whether we are asking you to learn more about a culture's view toward the elderly or appealing to you to develop some new skills, the power is all yours. What is being said here should be quite clear: you must act on what you

have learned about other cultures. The Persian poet Sa'di said much the same thing over seven thousand years ago: "Whoever acquires knowledge and does not practice it resembles him who ploughs his land and leaves it unsown."

Knowing yourself and your personal biases is a crucial element in becoming a competent intercultural communicator. The novelist James Baldwin said it best when he wrote, "The questions which one asks oneself begin, at last, to illuminate the world, and become one's key to the experience of others." We believe that in order for you to be self-reflexive and know from where you are coming when you enter into an intercultural interaction, you must have learned to (1) know your culture, (2) know your perceptions, (3) know how you act out those perceptions, and (4) monitor yourself. Although these four concepts work together simultaneously, it is easier to examine them separately.

BE AWARE OF YOUR CULTURE

Your first step toward knowing yourself should begin with your own culture. Remember, all people see the world through the lens of their culture. As Kim so well points out:

> Each of us is a product of our cultural background, including gender, ethnicity, family, age, religion, profession, and other life experiences. Our cultural inventory provides us with valuable insights for understanding our beliefs and attitudes, our values and assumptions. Thus, it is critical that we reflect on the various aspects of our own cultural identity and examine their positive and negative impacts on our personal and professional development.[20]

Stewart and Bennett, when speaking about the American culture, made a similar observation when they wrote, "An awareness of American culture along with examples of contrasting cultures contributes to the individual's understanding of her- or himself as a cultural being."[21]

EXAMINE YOUR PERSONAL ATTITUDES

Not only do you need to know the values, attitudes, and perceptions of your culture, but you also need to be aware of your own belief system. We are asking you to identify those personal attitudes, stereotypes, prejudices, and opinions that you carry around that bias the way the world appears to you. If you hold a certain attitude toward gay men, and a man who is gay talks to you, your pre-communication attitude will affect your response to what he says. Knowing your likes, dislikes, and degrees of personal ethnocentrism enables you to place them out in the open so you can detect the ways in which these attitudes influence communication.

UNDERSTAND YOUR COMMUNICATION STYLE

The third step in knowing yourself is somewhat more difficult than simply identifying your prejudices and predispositions. It involves discovering the kind of image you portray to the rest of the world. Ask yourself, "How do I communicate, and how do others perceive me?" If you perceive yourself in one way, and the people with whom you interact perceive you in another way, serious problems can arise. If, for instance, you see yourself as patient and calm, but you appear rushed and anxious, you will have a hard time understanding why people respond to you as they do.

TABLE 11.1 Communication Style

TRAIT	COMMUNICATION CHARACTERISTICS
Dominant	Speaks frequently, interrupts, controls conversation
Dramatic	Uses expressive language; often exaggerates and embellishes
Contentious	Argumentative and often hostile
Animated	Uses energetic and expressive gestures and facial expressions
Impression-leaving	States ideas and feelings in an indelible fashion
Relaxed	Calm, comfortable, and seldom nervous around others
Attentive	Good listener; offers encouragement to the speaker
Open	Discloses personal information; shows emotions and feelings
Friendly	Offers positive feedback and encouragement

Barnlund offers yet another insightful interpretation of what your individual communication style might include:

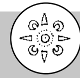
> By communication style is meant the topics people prefer to discuss, their favorite forms of interaction—ritual, repartee, argument, self-disclosure—and the depth of involvement they demand of each other. It includes the extent to which communicants rely upon the same channels—vocal, verbal, physical—for conveying information, and the extent to which they are tuned to the same level of meaning, that is, to the factual or emotional content of messages.[22]

As a starting point, we suggest that you learn to recognize your communication style—the manner in which you present yourself to others. Many communication scholars have attempted to isolate the characteristics that compose a communication personality. One such inventory, which Norton has proposed, has nine characteristics.[23] In Table 11.1, we offer a summary of each of these so that you can begin to evaluate your own communication style.

MONITOR YOURSELF

What should emerge from the last few paragraphs is that all people have unique ways of interacting. Discovering how you communicate is not always an easy task. It would be awkward and highly irregular for you to walk around asking people if they think you are relaxed, argumentative, friendly, animated, and the like. You must, therefore, be sensitive to the feedback you receive and candid in the reading of that feedback. The process of self-observation and analysis is often called "self-monitoring."[24] Some of the advantages of self-monitoring are discovering the appropriate behaviors in each situation, having control of your emotional reactions, creating good impressions, and modifying your behavior as you move from situation to situation.[25]

We conclude this section on self-awareness by reminding you once again that there is a vast difference between being self-aware and being



REMEMBER THIS

In order to know yourself sufficiently well to engage competently in intercultural interaction, you must know your own culture, your own perceptions, and how you act out those perceptions. Further, you must monitor yourself during interaction.

self-absorbed. The entire process of being a participant and an observer at the same time is not an easy assignment; it involves a balance of the two roles. As Morreale, Spitzberg, and Barge note, "The key to self-monitoring is to strike a balance between attention to your environment and your own motivation, knowledge and skills."[26]

Be Empathic

A well-known American Indian saying tells us, "We should not judge another person until we have walked two moons in his moccasins." Actually, what we should say is that empathy is about your trying to imagine how you would feel if you were wearing those moccasins. We used the word *imagine* here because it is physically and psychologically impossible to really know what another person is feeling and experiencing. The process of empathy is, of course, much more complicated than merely imagining.

Empathy, broadly defined, is a part of interpersonal sensitivity and social competence,[27] and, as Bernieri indicates, "is the ability to sense, perceive accurately, and respond appropriately to one's personal, interpersonal, and social environment.[28] Haynes and Avery further define empathy as "the ability to recognize and understand another person's perceptions and feelings, and to accurately convey that understanding through an accepting response."[29]

Defining empathy in a cultural setting, Ting-Toomey describes it in the following manner: "Through empathy we are willing to imaginatively place ourselves in the dissimilar other's cultural world and to experience what she or he is experiencing."[30] While these definitions might lead you to believe that empathy is a difficult process, it is in fact a skill everyone is capable of developing.

The importance of empathy to the study of interpersonal and intercultural competence cannot be overstated. After reviewing the literature on the topic of empathy, Broome concluded, "Empathy has been recognized as important to both general communication competence and as a central characteristic of competent and effective intercultural communication."[31] Calloway-Thomas, Cooper, and Blake echo Broome's commentary when they write, "Empathy is the bedrock of intercultural communication."[32]

UNDERSTANDING EMPATHY

Here, we need to mention two ideas that will aid you in understanding the role of empathy in intercultural communication. First, although we have focused primarily on culture, we also are concerned with the interpersonal aspects of intercultural communication. As Miller and Steinberg note, "To communicate interpersonally, one must leave the cultural and sociological levels of predications and psychically travel to the psychological level."[33] Simply put, while knowledge about another's culture can be used to make predictions, empathy also demands that the point of analysis be the individual's personality. Second, it is best to view empathy as a complex activity composed of many variables. It involves a cognitive component (thinking), an affective (emotional identification) dimension, and a communication element (activity). Bell explains these three variables and how they interact with each other:

> Cognitively, the empathic person takes the perspective of another person, and in so doing strives to see the world from the other's point of view. Affectively, the empathic person experiences the emotions of another; he or she feels the other's experiences. Communicatively, the empathic individual signals understanding and concern through verbal and nonverbal cues.[34]

ROADBLOCKS TO EMPATHY

Before we look at some of the ways you may improve your empathic skills, it might be helpful to examine a few characteristics that can impede empathy.

Diverse Cultural Backgrounds. Our first hindrance reminds you that you must approach each situation and individual from your own cultural perspective. Countless studies have verified the notion that individuals from similar cultures exhibit greater mutual empathic ability than do those from dissimilar cultures. What this means is that when talking with someone from a different culture, it will improve your empathic ability if you have as much knowledge as possible about that culture.

Constant Self-Focus. Perhaps the most common of all barriers to empathy is a constant self-focus. Attending to your own thoughts, or telling your own stories, uses much of the energy that you should direct toward your communication partner. At times, everyone is guilty of behaving according to the German proverb "Everyone thinks that all the bells echo his own thoughts."

Stereotypic Notions About Gender, Race, and Culture. The tendency to note only some features of an individual to the exclusion of others can cause you to misuse the data you gather about another person. If, for example, you notice only a person's gender, skin color, or surname and from this limited information make assumptions about the nature and character of the person, you are apt to do a poor job of empathizing. Admittedly, gender, color, and name offer you some data about the other person, but you must add to this knowledge. Although it is an overused analogy, you should remember that most outward features represent only the tip of the iceberg.

Self-Protective Behavior. When you appear to be evaluating other people, whether by what you say or by what you do, you are likely to make them feel defensive toward you. If you believe others are judging and evaluating you, you will hesitate to offer information that will foster empathy. Think about how awkward you would feel if, immediately after you shared some personal information with another person, the other person lectured you on the foolhardiness of your act. After a few minutes of criticism and ridicule, you probably would decide not to disclose any other information to that person.

IMPROVING EMPATHY

Up to this point, we have discussed the difficulties related to practicing empathy in intercultural encounters. Although it is nearly impossible to know another person completely, with a little practice, you can develop the skills necessary to be effective in the practice of empathy.

Pay Attention. Being focused during an interaction is the first step toward improving your empathic ability. Fracaro emphasizes the importance of hearing the intended message instead of focusing on your own agenda.[35] Trenholm and Jensen emphasize the importance of paying attention: "The single most important thing you do is remind yourself to pay attention to the spontaneous emotional expressions of others."[36] As you must know from personal experience, concentrating on one idea or one person requires a great deal of energy. This high level of attention is even more strenuous when applied to empathy, for it, like our attention span, tends to wander.

Communicate Empathy. Empathy is a reciprocal act; you and your communication partner must be expressive (unless you are interacting with someone from a culture that values interpersonal restraint). You cannot expect individuals from other cultures to offer you verbal and nonverbal messages about their internal states if you do not reciprocate their efforts. Trenholm and Jensen also maintain that if your expressive behavior encourages others to be more expressive, and you pay attention to the wider range of nonverbal cues they are displaying, you should be more accurate in reading their emotional states.[37]

Engage Only in Culturally Accepted Behaviors. Empathy can be enhanced through awareness of specific behaviors that members of a particular culture or co-culture might find impertinent or insulting. For instance, you would not receive vital information to use for empathy if you refused the hospitality offered by an Arab. The point here is that to be successful as an intercultural communicator, you must be empathic, and that skill can be cultivated only if you are sensitive to the cultural values and customs of the person with whom you are interacting.

Learn to Accept Differences. Our final recommendation for improving your empathic skills is that you learn to accept and appreciate cultural differences. You must learn to suspend, or at least keep in check, the cultural perspectives that are unique to your experiences. Arasaratnam and Doerfel reflect this notion when they say, "Competent intercultural communicators are person-centered, sensitive, and kind, have experience with different cultures, want to learn about cultural matters, and are good at these processes.[38] This link between empathy and acceptance is mentioned by Lewis when he notes, "Empathy is based on accepting differences and building on these in a positive manner."[39]

Closely related to empathy is the skill of effective listening. In order to practice empathy effectively, you must have the ability to listen effectively in order to pick up the subtle clues given off by your communication partner. These clues make it possible for you to "experience" their feelings and states of being.

Practice Effective Listening

A major theme of this book has been that culture greatly influences how you communicate, what you communicate, and how you respond to communication. Listening skills are embedded in all three of those important intercultural communication activities because listening and culture are interconnected. Morreale, Spitzberg, and Barge speak to the importance of that connection when they write, "Cultural differences in how people engage in listening are a reality, so you need to recognize and respect such culturally based differences in listening style."[40] In addition, as Brownell says, "effective listening reduces costly misunderstandings."[41] To help you better understand the role culture plays in listening, we are going to examine some of ways the two go together.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT LISTENING

According to Lewis, cultural differences in listening behavior may be categorized as *direct* or *indirect*"[42] While these orientations represent two extremes, they nevertheless provide a useful way of understanding listening. In direct listening cultures such as France, Germany, and the United States, people listen primarily for facts and concrete information.

REMEMBER THIS

Silence provides an opportunity to gain insight into your conversations and a clear understanding about the people with whom you are interacting.

Listeners in these cultures also confront speakers directly and feel comfortable asking questions. In indirect listening cultures such as Finland, Japan, and Sweden, people listen in a very different manner. Interruptions do not occur while the speaker is talking, and politeness is part of the listener's behavior.

THE VALUE PLACED ON LISTENING

As we have noted elsewhere, in many cultures in the Far East, the amount of time spent talking and the value placed on talking are very different from what happens in cultures that value conversation (the Middle East, Latin America, and the United States). Japan is a relatively homogeneous culture, and therefore most people share a pool of common experiences. This commonality helps one discern what the other is thinking and feeling without using words. The Roman philosopher Cato recognized the value of silence and listening when he said, "Never am I more active than when I do nothing." Hence, silence is often valued over talk. Think about the connection between speaking, listening, and silence in the Buddhist expression "There is a truth that words cannot reach." Place that against the Arab proverb that notes, "Your mouth is your sword." Two very different orientations—one favoring silence and one preferring talk.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION AND LISTENING

Even the nonverbal responses to what you hear are often influenced by culture. In the United States, it is often a sign of paying attention when you make the sound "mm-hmm" or "uh-huh" when someone is talking. Within the African-American co-culture, the paralanguage responses on the part of the listener are even more pronounced with what is termed "call and response." When this technique is employed there is an active exchange between speaker and listener that is not found in most cultures.[43]

Eye contact is another nonverbal action that influences the listening process. In the United States and other Western cultures, a good listener is seen as paying attention if he or she makes direct eye contact with the person talking. But you will recall that direct eye-to-eye contact is not the correct custom in many Asian cultures or in the American Indian co-culture. In short, to be a good listener you need to know what nonverbal actions are appropriate and which might hamper the communication encounter.

ENCOURAGE FEEDBACK

The interactive nature of communication brings us to our next suggestion: encourage feedback. Feedback is the information generated by the person who receives the message—information that is "fed back" to the person who sent the original message. This information may be a smile, the words "No, thank you," or even complete silence, void of any outward expression. As Wood points out, "Feedback may be verbal, nonverbal, or both and it may be intentional or unintentional."[44] Regardless of the form of the feedback, it allows you the opportunity to make qualitative judgments about the

communication event while it is taking place. These judgments offer useful data that enables you to correct and adjust your next message. A competent communicator uses feedback both to monitor the communication process and to exercise some control over it. Feedback clearly manifests the three axioms we discussed at the beginning of this chapter—you can learn, you can make choices, and you can act differently.

Granting that feedback is critical, you must learn to create an atmosphere that encourages other people to give you feedback. Therefore, we will review a number of communication skills that encourage other people to send you messages about the current situation—messages that might be useful as you continue the communication event.

Nonverbal Feedback. The first step in improving nonverbal feedback is recognizing that it takes many forms and its meanings are culture bound. This is perhaps best illustrated by relating a personal experience of one of your authors. After missing an exam, one of his Japanese students came to office hours. During the visit, the student continually giggled, averted her eyes, and held her hand over her mouth. From a Western perspective, the student's nonverbal behavior suggested she was frivolous (laughing), deceptive (averting eyes), and very nervous (hand over mouth), which further contributed to the impression of deceptiveness. The student offered no reason for missing the exam and did not ask for a retake. She simply apologized for not being there. A third party, however, had already told your author that the student's absence was due to the death of her grandfather. This demonstrates the importance of not assuming that nonverbal feedback in one culture carries the same meaning as it does in another culture.

Verbal Feedback. Positive verbal behavior can also encourage feedback. In cultures that value conversation and openness, asking questions is an excellent method of encouraging feedback about the quality of your messages. You can ask questions such as "Perhaps we should start the meeting by introducing ourselves. Is that agreeable?" or "How do you think we should start the meeting?" Further questions can be used to seek additional clarification. If asked in a non-threatening manner, even the question "Am I clear?" assists in monitoring the level of comprehension. We should remind you before we leave this topic that in some Asian cultures, as we have already pointed out, the word *no* is often avoided.[45] Your use of words also encourages feedback if you relate the words directly to what the other person has just said. You know from your own experience that it is very disconcerting if you tell a friend that you do not feel well, and your friend responds that she or he just received an "A" on an examination.

Silence as Feedback. There are times when silence instead of words will inspire feedback. You have repeatedly seen that every culture has a unique communication style. Some cultural styles call for periods of silence and/or long pauses, and you must learn to respect these phases during the encounter. Giving the person this quiet period creates an atmosphere that promotes feedback once the silence is broken. As we noted elsewhere in the book, many people from Asian cultures do not enjoy being hurried when they are negotiating and/or solving problems. If you learn to remain silent, you will be sending them some positive feedback about the transaction. As we noted, in some cultures there is no positive compensation for a quick decision, particularly if one made that decision without sufficient feedback.

CONSIDER THIS

In this chapter, three ideas were discussed: you can learn, you can make choices, and you can act differently. How can you incorporate these ideas into your daily communicative activities? What specific personal behaviors must you employ to ensure you are learning, making choices, and modifying how you act?

Offer Non-Evaluative Feedback. Although the idea of being non-judgmental might be an idea embedded in all our other suggestions, it is important enough to justify making it an independent category. The major advantage of non-evaluative feedback is that it sets a positive tone. As Gamble and Gamble point out, "When we provide non-evaluative feedback, we refrain from revealing our own personal opinions or judgments."[46] When you engage in non-evaluative feedback, you enable your communication partner to take part in the conversation without feeling that you are saying (verbally or nonverbally), "I don't think much of your ideas and beliefs." Built into our last suggestion is the recommendation that you should try to avoid negative feedback. We will now list a few of the kinds of feedback that carry negative connotations. We should mention that while some of them might have a Western point of reference, your experiences should tell you they are common enough that they can have a negative outcome regardless of the culture. Hence we suggest that you avoid (1) frequent shifting of your body as if you are bored with what the other person is saying, (2) a slouching posture, (3) engaging in other activities (talking to someone else, writing) while the other person is talking, (4) having your arms folded in front of your chest, and (5) frowning and scowling.

Before we conclude this section on developing intercultural communication competence, we have one more piece of advice for you: learn to be flexible in your communicative interactions.

Develop Communication Flexibility

Many experts in communication competence believe that one definition of competence is having the ability to adjust and fashion your communication behavior to fit the setting, the other person, and yourself.[47] As a clear rationale for malleability in the intercultural context, Gudykunst and Kim offer the following advice:

> To gather information about and adapt our behavior to strangers, we must be flexible in our behavior. We must be able to select strategies that are appropriate to gather the information we need about strangers in order to communicate effectively with them. This requires that we have different behavioral options for gathering information open to us.[48]

When speaking to the issue of how communication flexibility applies to international negotiations, Foster used an analogy:

> The better [international] negotiators are ultimately pragmatic. They are not oaks; rather, they are more like willows. Unable to predict every situation, every twist and turn, even in a domestic situation, they know that it is nearly impossible to do so in a cross-cultural one.[49]

An obvious component of being flexible is having a tolerance for ambiguity. If your culture values competition and aggressive action, and you are around someone from a culture that values cooperation and interpersonal harmony, you might find his or her behavior ambiguous and confusing; yet coping with ambiguity is a key element in intercultural competence. As Ruben and Kealey note, "The ability to react to new and ambiguous situations with minimal discomfort has long been thought to be an important asset when adjusting to a new culture."[50]

Coping with ambiguity is a key element of intercultural competence.

There are some selective behaviors that competent intercultural communicators employ to increase their tolerance for ambiguity. Guirdham suggests some specific actions that might be helpful. First, "[delay] the decision on how to approach a new person or situation until as much information as possible has been gained by observation."[51] Second, "[use] trial and error rather than the same formula until what works becomes clear."[52] Finally, perhaps the best advice on how to develop a tolerance for ambiguity is to be nonjudgmental, practice patience, expect the unexpected, and be adaptive. Remember the advice contained in the Spanish proverb, "I dance to the tune that is played."

Although intercultural communication competence is requisite to successful interactions with people from different cultures, it also gives you a huge advantage when you venture into a new culture for an extended period.

Venturing into a New Culture

Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "Traveling makes a man wiser, but less happy." This adage underscores how everyone likes the familiar. When you leave your familiar and comfortable surroundings and journey into new cultures, you may experience anxiety and emotional disturbances when two sets of realities and conceptualizations meet.[53] You should not find it surprising that dealing with a new culture can produce mental stress and subsequent coping difficulties. As Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern point out, "Communication with the culturally different is frequently associated with adverse emotional responses leading to feelings of awkwardness and anxiety."[54] Smith and Bond offer a more specific summary of some of the problems of moving to a new location: "Separation from previous support networks, climate differences, increased health problems, changes in material and technical resources, lack of information about daily routines (e.g., how to travel from A to B), and so forth all exact their price."[55]

If you are spending a weekend in Paris or a week at Cancun, cultural adaptation should not be a problem. However, if you are entering a new culture for any prolonged period of time, you will have to adapt to that culture. Before we discuss the problems associated with cultural adaptation, you need to realize that there is a difference between people who are temporary visitors (sojourners) and those who intend to take up long-term or permanent residence in another country (immigrants, settlers). This distinction is relevant, as Bochner notes,

> because their respective contact experiences, and hence their reactions, differ. For instance, the two groups have different time frames. Settlers are in the process of making a permanent

> commitment to their new society, whereas sojourners are there on a temporary basis, although that may vary from a day with tourists to several years in the case of foreign students.[56]

The problems facing anyone adapting to a new culture are numerous. Whether you are a sojourner, a long-term visitor, or are planning to become a permanent resident, you will initially experience various psychological and physical discomforts. This experience is known as *culture shock*.[57] If you are a short-term visitor, learning to recognize and cope with the symptoms of culture shock during the period of your visit is normally a sufficient adjustment to help you complete your stay. If, on the other hand, you are planning a long-term or permanent stay, you must go beyond coping with culture shock and fully adapt to the new culture. In the following discussion, we will first address culture shock, then turn our attention to full cultural adaptation.

Culture Shock

Embarking on a research project, Summer, Katherine, and Patricia arrived in San José, Costa Rica jubilant and full of eager expectations. "We had so much going for us. We were energetic, open-minded, and research-hungry explorers! Most importantly we were friends, embarking on a journey."[58] However, during the adjustment period, many new arrivals experience fear or feelings of being isolated, disliked, and even distrusted.[59] Thus, the three explorers' jubilance was short lived. "As we struggled to convert dollars to the Costa Rican currency of *colones*, to communicate under seemingly simple circumstances (e.g., ordering sandwiches from a deli counter), and to navigate the Costa Rican streets (which are largely unnamed and unmarked), our grand expedition seemed far away from the reality: We were foreigners. Moreover, we were experiencing culture shock."[60]

Major differences in perception can produce culture shock.

Alan Oddie/PhotoEdit

DEFINING CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock is a mental state that comes from the transition that occurs when you go from a familiar environment to an unfamiliar one and find that your old, established patterns of behavior are ineffective.[61] The term "culture shock" was first introduced in 1960 by the anthropologist Kalvero Oberg. In the following paragraph, he offers a detailed definition and account of this phenomenon:

> Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situation of daily life: how to give orders, how to make purchases, when and where not to respond. Now these cues, which may be words, gestures, facial expressions, customs, or norms, are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept. All of us depend for our peace of mind and efficiency on hundreds of these cues, most of which we are not consciously aware [of].[62]

CONSIDER THIS

Based upon what you have read about their experiences in adjusting to life in Costa Rica, what advance preparations could Summer, Katherine, and Patricia have made to prepare themselves for the confusion they experienced upon arrival in San José? How would you prepare for a sojourn into another culture? To what extent do you believe it would be possible to plan well enough in advance that you could ease yourself into a new culture?

While Oberg's definition is important because it was the first, it fails to mention that culture shock also involves a powerful disruption of one's routines, ego, and self image.[63] These feelings not only apply to sojourners, businesspersons, students, government employees, and immigrants, but, as Brislin notes, can "be experienced by individuals who have face-to-face contact with out-group members within their own culture."[64]

REACTIONS TO CULTURE SHOCK

The reactions associated with culture shock vary among individuals and can appear at different times. For example, the person who is constantly encountering other cultures might experience a mild and brief anxiety period. Culture shock, says Smith, can spawn a host of reactions that have the potential to create problems. At the very least, culture shock can cause you to feel "out of sorts," "fatigued," and "not wholly in the moment."[65] According to Ryan and Twibell, culture shock causes stressors that demand readjustment before you can adapt to new surroundings. These stressors may include communication problems, mechanical and environmental differences, isolation, and the experiencing of different customs, attitudes, and beliefs. These stressors can lead to a variety of individual reactions.[66] For your benefit, we have listed some of the reactions you may feel while adjusting to a new culture. We should add that this list is not intended to overwhelm you or make you apprehensive about venturing into another culture, but rather to help you be prepared when you experience some of these reactions.[67]

- Antagonism toward the new environment
- A sense of disorientation

- Feelings of rejection
- Upset stomach and headaches
- Homesickness
- Missing friends and family
- Feeling a loss of status and influence
- Withdrawal
- Perceiving members of the host culture to be insensitive

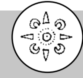
THE STAGES OF CULTURE SHOCK (THE U-CURVE)

Although there are variations in both how people respond to culture shock, and the amount of time they need to adjust, most of the literature in the area of culture shock suggests that people normally go through four stages. We should first mention that the veins separating the stages are almost impossible to see—that is to say, the transition from one stage to another is not as clear-cut as our description might imply. You should view the stages as a U-shaped curve. "The U-curve depicts the initial optimism and elation in the host culture, the subsequent dip in the level of adaptation, and the following gradual recovery."[68] We will examine these four stages in more detail to give you a better understand of the complex culture shock process.

Excitement Phase. The first phase, visualized as the top of the left side of the U-curve, is usually filled with excitement, hopefulness, and a sense of euphoria as the individual anticipates being exposed to a new culture. Marx offers an excellent review of how this first phase might be perceived by someone undertaking an international management assignment:

> The new life is viewed as providing endless opportunities and the manager is usually in a state of exhilaration. There is openness and curiosity, combined with a readiness to accept whatever comes. Most importantly, at this stage judgment is reserved and even minor irritations are suppressed in favor of concentrating on the nice things about the job, the country, the colleagues, the food, etc.[69]

Disenchantment Phase. This second phase begins when you recognize the reality of the new setting[70] and some initial problems begin to develop. For example, adaptation and communication difficulties begin to emerge. As Triandis notes, "The second phase is a period when difficulties of language, inadequate schools for the children, poor housing, crowded transportation, chaotic shopping, and the like begin taking their toll."[71] Dodd adds that this phase is often marked by feelings of disappointment, discontent, and that everything is awful.[72] It is the crisis period of culture shock. People become confused and baffled by their new surroundings. This frustration can make them easily irritated,



REMEMBER THIS

Culture shock can be visualized as a U-shaped curve that displays one's initial optimism about the host culture, one's subsequent dip in feelings about the host culture, and one's gradual recovery to a point of being able to function effectively in the new culture.

hostile, impatient, angry, and even incompetent. In extreme cases these uncomfortable feelings "can border on hating everything foreign."[73]

Beginning Resolution Phase. The third phase is characterized by gaining some understanding of the new culture. Here the person is gradually making some adjustments and modifications in how he or she is coping with the new culture. Events and people now seem much more predictable and less stressful.

Effective Functioning Phase. In this final phase, at the top of the right side of the U-curve, the person now understands the key elements of the new culture (values, special customs, beliefs, communication patterns, etc.). At this stage, Ryan and Twibell report, people feel comfortable in the new culture and are able to function with some degree of success.[74] One's ability to live and function within two cultures (the old and the new) is frequently accompanied by feelings of elation and satisfaction.

Some researchers suggest that there is also a kind of reverse culture shock that takes place when people return home. As Harris and Moran note, "Having objectively perceived his or her culture from abroad, one can have a severe and sustained jolt through reentry shock."[75] Expatriates often arrive home missing the new friends they made while overseas. Some bemoan the loss of prestige associated with foreign assignments. When this happens, the returnee experiences the same four phases of adjustment we discussed in the U-curve. This gives rise to the term "W-curve," because it joins two U-curves together.

THE LESSONS OF CULTURE SHOCK

Our discussion of culture shock was predicated on two premises. First, each year millions of people go abroad to work, travel, and study. Second, many of those experiences end up producing stress, homesickness, and confusion. Although we have placed the topic of culture shock under the category of "problems," we would be remiss if we concluded our discussion without emphasizing the idea that culture shock can be an explicit learning experience. In fact, as Adler notes, "Severe culture shock is often a positive sign indicating that the expatriate is becoming deeply involved in the new culture instead of remaining isolated in an expatriate ghetto."[76] This involvement helps people learn about themselves and, at the same time, other cultures. In a study examining culture shock, Kawano concluded that culture shock "gives the sojourners a chance to learn about themselves. In this sense experiencing culture shock has a strong potential to make people be multicultural or bicultural."[77]

Beyond Culture Shock

Today, widespread immigration and the movement and relocation of millions of refugees are established facts. These people are faced with the monumental task of adapting to nearly all aspects of a new culture—and for a long period of time, perhaps permanently. This impact and the importance of having to adapt to a new culture are clearly articulated by Kosic and Phalet:

> International migration creates culturally and ethnically diverse societies. As people from different cultures interact with each other, they face not only different belief systems, values,

> customs, and behaviors, but unfortunately also prejudice towards each other. It seems that social relationships between immigrants and local populations often lack cohesion and sometimes show strong antagonism or even racism underneath an outward appearance of tolerance. In political and public debates, immigrants are often depicted as trouble-makers.[78]

Many of these newcomers experience significant difficulty while adapting to the host culture. As Mak, Westwood, Ishiyama, and Barker point out, "Newcomers may not be ready to learn and practice social behaviors appropriate to the new culture in the initial period of settlement. It is not unusual for recent arrivals to be overwhelmed by the immediate demands and challenges in orienting to living in a new place."[79] Thus, the problems facing anyone trying to adapt to a new and often quite different culture are numerous. During the initial adjustment period, new arrivals will most likely experience the fears and feelings of isolation, being disliked, and distrust we described earlier as culture shock.[80] A review of some of the reasons behind these feelings is an excellent first step in developing the skills needed to adjust to a new culture.

ACCULTURATION: ADJUSTING TO A NEW CULTURE

Acculturation, as you might guess, is the process of learning to live in a new culture. Berry defines acculturation as "the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members. . . . At the individual level it involves changes in a person's behavioral repertoire."[81] This process of adjustment is a lengthy process that requires gaining a large body of useful knowledge about the new culture.

As you have seen throughout this book, gathering a fund of knowledge about another culture takes a variety of forms, ranging from the apparent to the subtle. For example, it should be evident to you that learning the language of the host culture will produce positive results. Now let us turn our attention to a few issues and strategies that will expedite and facilitate the adaptation process. We will first examine the issues of language, disequilibrium, and ethnocentrism.

Language. It is obvious that someone living in a new culture "must meet the challenges of language barriers, unfamiliar customs and practices, and cultural variations in verbal and nonverbal communication styles in order to achieve successful understanding."[82] Noting this difficulty, Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, "No man should travel until he has learned the language of the country he visits. Otherwise he makes himself a great baby—so helpless and so ridiculous." This problem is frequently seen among long-term sojourners and immigrants to the United States who have not mastered English. They experience social isolation and are, as Leong and Chou note, forced "into fields that require less mastery of English language and less interpersonal interaction."[83]

When we talk of problems associated with being exposed to a new language, we are talking about two ideas: language acquisition and the ways of speaking unique to the new culture. Both of these can delay the adaptation process. Harper summarizes this view when she notes, "Lack of language skills is a strong barrier to effective cultural adjustment and communication, whereas lack of knowledge concerning the ways of speaking of a particular group will reduce the level of understanding that we can achieve with our counterparts."[84] People trying to adjust to and interact with a new culture must face challenges associated not only with learning an additional language but also with the unique cultural patterns found within each language. As we demonstrated

in Chapter 6, cultural variations in the use of language can mean many things, from the use of idioms, to different rules for turn taking, to linguistic ways of showing respect. If you cannot learn the host culture's language, then you should at least try to master some of its basics, such as greeting behaviors, proper polite responses, and words that deal with public transportation and shopping for food and other necessities.

CONSIDER THIS

What kinds of problems might you encounter entering a new culture where you have little if any proficiency in the language of the host culture? How would you go about preparing yourself to overcome your language deficit?

Disequilibrium. Successful adaptation demands a certain level of knowledge about the host culture and requires you to make correct choices regarding that knowledge. Those choices can include everything from learning proper greeting behaviors (such as bowing, shaking hands, or hugging) to deciding about eating utensils (such as chopsticks, knives and forks, or fingers). According to Kim, sojourners are, "at least temporarily, in a state of disequilibrium, which is manifested in many emotional 'lows' of uncertainty, confusion, and anxiety."[85]

The disequilibrium associated with adaptation raises two conflicting issues: (1) a relative preference for maintaining one's native culture and identity, and (2) a relative preference for having contact with and interacting with members of the host culture.[86] These conflicting issues lead to four forms of coping for the sojourner moving into a new culture. These range from full acceptance of the new culture to almost total rejection. The first, *assimilation*, occurs when immigrants no longer wish to maintain their native cultural identity and seek to become absorbed into the host society. The second is *separation*, which occurs when immigrants value holding on to their native culture, turn their backs on interaction with the host culture, and turn inward toward their native culture. The third form, *integration*, occurs when sojourners have an interest in maintaining their native culture during daily interactions with people from the host culture. In this situation, some degree of the sojourners' native culture is maintained, while they simultaneously try to function as an integral member of their host culture's social network. The final form is *marginalization*, which occurs where there is little possibility of maintaining one's native cultural heritage (often due to forced cultural loss) or little interest in having relations with others (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination).[87] As you can see, the first three forms of coping are generally elective on the part of the immigrant. The strategy of marginalization, however, is generally beyond the choice of the individual and is a result of uncontrollable external forces.

Ethnocentrism. Barriers to acculturation often spring up because of ethnocentrism, leading to prejudice, which in turn results in mistrust, hostility, and even hate.[88] What is interesting about ethnocentrism is that it affects both the immigrant and the host culture. According to Gouttefarde, members of the host culture also experience many of the adaptation symptoms associated with the sojourner: feelings of anxiety, fear, depression, ineptitude, and fatigue.[89] This can lead to members of the host culture passing judgment on outsiders while the person trying to adapt cannot, or will not, expunge his or her native culture. The key to effective adaptation is for both parties to recognize the strong pull of ethnocentrism and attempt to keep it in check.

Stress-Adaptation-Growth Dynamic. In more recent work, Kim has developed a theoretical model that paints the cultural adjustment process as being more complex than the U- and W-curve models of culture shock that we discussed earlier. She sees adjustment as a process of "stress-adaptation-growth." From this perspective, upon entering the new culture the sojourner encounters *stress* as a result of developing a diminished ability to function normally. That is, he or she becomes stressed when confronted with new and different ways of dealing with daily life. To reduce the stress, the sojourner develops and incorporates new cultural norms required to function normally and thereby begins *adaptation* to the new environment. Through continual experience of stress-adaptation, the individual's perspectives broaden, resulting in personal *growth*. The three components of stress-adaptation-growth constitute a dynamic process.[90] According to Kim:

> The stress-adaptation-growth dynamic plays out not in a smooth linear progression, but in a cyclic and continual "draw-back-to-leap" representation of the present articulation of the interrelationship among stress, adaptation, and growth. Strangers respond to each stressful experience by "drawing back," which in turn activates adaptive energy to help them reorganize themselves and "leap forward.". . . The process is continuous as long as there are new environmental challenges. [91]

To conclude our discussion of adapting to a foreign culture, we offer several useful strategies you may employ to ease your adjustment to your new culture.

ADAPTATION STRATEGIES

Make Personal Contact with the Host Culture. Direct contact with the host culture promotes and facilitates successful adaptation to a new culture. Begley accentuates the importance of direct contact when she notes, "Although insight and knowledge can be gained through prior intercultural study, additional practical wisdom is attained through everyday conversations with people from other cultures."[92] Making friends is an excellent means of developing contacts within the host culture. In fact, studies point out "that having friends among the nationals of the host country, rather than having contacts only with fellow expatriates, is an important determinant of satisfaction."[93] At the same time, it is important to have periodic interaction with other expatriates so you can share problems and solutions and find a degree of comfort in speaking your native language.

Learn About the Host Culture. One of the major themes of this book has been the notion that developing a fund of knowledge about other cultures is a useful first step toward improving intercultural communication. Adaptation becomes less troublesome if you become aware of the fundamental characteristics of the culture in which you will be living. Chen and Starosta note, "Culture awareness refers to an understanding of one's own and others' cultures that affect how people think and behave. This includes understanding commonalities of human behavior and differences in cultural patterns."[94] We urge you, therefore, to learn about the culture's religious orientation, political system, key values and beliefs, verbal and nonverbal behaviors, family organization, social etiquette, and the like.

Participate in Cultural Activities. An excellent way to learn about a new culture is to be an active participant in that culture. Attend social, religious, and cultural events. If

possible, try to interact with members of the host culture while attending these events. In most instances, members of the host culture will welcome the opportunity to learn about your culture while they are sharing theirs with you.

HOST CULTURES' REACTIONS TO IMMIGRATION

We have thus far discussed the problems of people who enter a new culture for the purpose of a long-term visit or to settle as permanent residents. Berry has raised another interesting issue: the effect acculturation has upon long-settled populations as they attempt to maintain their societies in the face of increasing cultural diversity in their midst.[95] Large migrations of people moving into a new country and culture, for various reasons ranging from employment opportunities to being political refugees, have in many circumstances resulted in a backlash to immigration where members of the host society developed feelings of being invaded, overrun, and losing their culture. Liu expresses this problem in the following paragraph:

> One can hardly walk along a major street for ten minutes without passing a restaurant featuring, among others, Mexican, Italian, Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese, or Thai food, representing the development of a multicultural environment. The most significant contributor to this multicultural environment is the ever-increasing levels of immigration. . . . With each encounter of alternative food, clothing, architecture, lifestyle, art, language, and medicine, we learn some new things outside of our "village" culture. Living with "others," we are being multiculturalized every day. . . . Within this framework, there are bipolar reactions. Some host nationals express concerns over the threat ethnic cultures might pose [to] the mainstream cultural values, the political and economic power structure, and the distribution of employment opportunities. On the other hand, migrants may be forming state and national associations to maintain their ethnic culture heritage and promote the survival of their languages within the mainstream institutions.[96]

In the United States, many small communities that have historically been predominately white, Christian, and English speaking are now finding their neighborhoods populated by people who speak little English, practice non-Christian religions, wear strange clothing, and represent a large variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. In many circumstances, these changes result in an anti-immigrant backlash. The news media often report these anti-immigration attitudes with stories about demands for English to be established as an official language and for dress codes forbidding children who attend public schools to wear ethnic clothing, and cries about "cheap" labor taking away jobs from "real" Americans.

We can only point out that there is a natural tendency for people to react in

CONSIDER THIS

What problems are associated with a host culture being affected by the acculturation of immigrants into long-settled populations? Is it possible for large influxes of immigrants into a community to be acculturated and accepted without strife and intolerance? What responsibilities do members of the host culture have to make immigrants feel at home and accepted in their new community?

a negative manner when they perceive that their way of life is being upset and changed—especially by an influx of people from other cultures. We strongly believe that people must learn to be tolerant and adapt to the changing world. Unfortunately, as Hogland reports, "While shrinking the world, the forces of technology, trade and communications have done little to make it a more tolerant place."[97] In order to work toward a world where diverse cultures can live side by side in a community, we urge you to be open, objective, and tolerant. With a receptive perspective, you can learn about the new cultures in your community and learn to be accepting.

We end this section on improvement by reminding you that successful intercultural communication should always begin with your trying to understand the characteristics of the culture with which you will be interacting. Once you acquire this understanding, you can decide what constitutes appropriate (and inappropriate) behavior. Nathaniel Brandon offered sound advice when he said, "The first step toward change is awareness. The second step is acceptance." We urge you, therefore, to develop your awareness and learn to be tolerant and accepting. A first step toward this goal is to develop a personal intercultural ethic.

Intercultural Ethics

If you are interacting with members of other cultures, it is not at all unusual to find yourself in discussions where there are disagreements about what is right and what is wrong. Reflect for a moment on some of the following assertions:

- War is appropriate in some circumstances.
- War is always wrong.
- Women always have the right to be in control of their reproductive behaviors.
- Abortion is always wrong.
- Sending jobs overseas is good for the economy.
- Sending work overseas takes jobs away from hard-working Americans.

Deciding how you feel about these positions involves having to make judgments that contain some ethical implications and focus on questions of what is right, wrong, proper, and improper. Considering these positions also may require that you think about them in a global sense, considering what is appropriate for your society or for the global society as a whole, rather than what might apply to one or a few individuals. Ethics, therefore, can be seen as a reflection of your convictions, which are rooted in your culture. They also provide guidelines that influence the manner in which you communicate with other people. Ethics, therefore, help you determine what you ought to do, how you ought to act, and how you should interact with people.

What Is Ethics?

Ethics refers to judgments that focus "on degrees of rightness and wrongness, virtue and vice, and obligation in human behavior."[98] Ethics attempts to "provide the tools for making difficult moral choices, in both our personal and our professional lives."[99] These choices are made difficult when ethical practices collide—as they often do in intercultural interactions.

If one culture approves of such behavior as cannibalism, polygamy, or female infanticide and another culture condemns it, what does this indicate?[100] It mainly suggests that

there is cultural diversity among ethical systems. Day identifies this problem when he writes, "The most difficult ethical dilemmas arrive when conflicts arise between two 'right' moral obligations." Thus, ethics often involves the balancing of competing rights when there is no 'correct' answer."[101]

This observation of seemingly diverse moral systems raises the question of whether there is an absolute morality. People do hold differing beliefs and make diverse arguments about whether there is a "true" morality, whether morality is absolute, or whether it is relative to specific cultures. It is not our purpose here to settle the dispute. Rather, we will give you a brief overview of each perspective and indicate how we will deal with the issue. In the end, you must reach your own conclusions.

> **REMEMBER THIS**
>
> *Ethics is a tool that you may use when making difficult moral choices. These choices often involve the balancing of competing rights when there is no "correct" answer.*

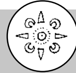
FUNDAMENTALISM

The first approach is known as *fundamentalism* or *moral absolutism*. In this view, expressed by Harper, "ethical principles are universally applicable…[and] timeless moral truths are rooted in human nature and independent of the conventions of particular societies."[102] Brannigan expands this notion by saying adherents to this position "believe that there are definitive, true moral rules and codes that apply to all people at all times. These rules constitute objective moral standards and they are exceptionless."[103] What these writers are implying is that there is a universal morality that applies to all people at all times, everywhere. Thus, by definition people or cultures who differ from or follow practices that lie outside this universal moral concept engage in unethical behavior.

CULTURAL RELATIVISM

Unlike the absolutist worldview described above, the second approach follows from a relativistic worldview. This orientation is usually referred to as *cultural relativism*, *moral relativism*, or *ethical multiculturalism*,[104] and holds that ethical principles are culturally bound, context dependent, and only applicable to their respective cultures.[105] This worldview underscores the fact that cultures differ not only in their practices and beliefs, but also with respect to their moral rules, which are strictly dependent upon a culture's own beliefs, customs, and practices.[106] This view is appropriately explained by the philosopher Gilbert Harman:

> Moral right and wrong (good and bad, justice and injustice, virtue and

> **REMEMBER THIS** 
>
> *A fundamentalist perspective holds that there is a timeless absolute morality that applies to everyone everywhere and is independent of the conventions of individual cultures.*

> vice, etc.) are always relative to a choice of moral framework. What is morally right in relation to one moral framework can be morally wrong in relation to a different moral framework. And no moral framework is objectively privileged as the one true morality.[107]

This statement may be succinctly summarized as "There is no single true morality. There are many different moral frameworks, none of which is more correct than the others."[108]

Cultural relativism also includes the concept of *ethical relativism*, which, according to Robertson and Crittenden, "infers that ethical standards vary from culture to culture,"[109] and thus, one standard is as valid as another one. If, for example, bribery, or *bustarella*, is an acceptable and expected behavior in Italy, then under the ethical relativistic view the intolerance of bribery in the United States is no more or less ethical that the toleration of bribery in Italy. A secondary dynamic that follows from cultural relativism is that ethical standards are subject to change. Robertson and Crittenden suggest that the dynamic of *convergence* will cause standards and norms everywhere to shift as globalization leads to common values regarding economic and work-related behavior.[110]

It is not our purpose here to argue for either the correctness of, or your acceptance of, the fundamentalist or relativistic worldview. We will defer to the Taoist philosophic tradition, which holds that humans exist simultaneously in both an ontological and an axiological order. In a simplified explanation, the *ontological* order is the world that is, and the *axiological* order is the world that ought to be. In the world that is, ethics and morality are culturally relative. Perhaps, in the world that ought to be, ethics and morality would be absolute. But, as we primarily exist in the ontological order, we will proceed on the assumption that rightly or wrongly, ethics and morality are culturally relative.

Before we move into the remainder of this section, there is one more concern about moral and ethical behavior that we wish to raise. Although we have discussed both fundamentalist and relativistic ethical perspectives, we have not addressed the concept of evil in the world. We believe that evil is independent of culture and is borne by individuals. In the words of noted Austrian psychotherapist and Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl, "There are but two races of humankind: the decent and the indecent." These two characteristics transcend all other demographic categories and are found everywhere. Thus, the "indecent" are found in all cultures, but the unethical activities exhibited in those cultures are those of individuals and not those of their culture.

The remainder of this section will focus on orientations and behaviors you may adopt that will assist you in the practice of ethical behavior when interacting with people from diverse cultures.

REMEMBER THIS

The relativistic perspective of ethics holds that values and morality are culturally bound and dependent only on the perspective of their respective culture.

The Practice of Ethical Intercultural Communication

The remainder of this section will discuss five orientations and recommend behaviors that follow from those orientations to help you develop your intercultural ethic.

Communication Elicits a Response

We have previously stressed that the messages you send may elicit both intentional and unintentional responses. When you are communicating within your own cultural sphere, it is sometimes difficult to predict what unintended responses you might elicit. And in the intercultural environment, where cultural diversity is a factor, it is much more difficult for you to assess and predict the type of response your messages will elicit. For example, you have learned, as part of your cultural endowment, the appropriate way to respond to, and thank someone for, a compliment or a gift. You can predict with a high degree of accuracy what others expect from you as well as how they will respond to your signs of appreciation. Forecasting the responses of people from other cultures is far more difficult. Let us for a moment stay with our simple example of thanking someone. In Arab cultures, gift recipients are expected to be profuse in offering thanks, whereas in England, recipients are expected to offer restrained thanks, because too much exuberance is considered offensive.

Messages carry the potential to have powerful effects on the people with whom you may interact. You must, therefore, always be keenly aware of the effects your message have on other people. Tead explains the potential power of communication when he writes:

> Without indulging in too great refinements, let us remind ourselves that communication also has at bottom a moral aspect. It does, when all is said, anticipate a change in the conduct of the recipient. If the change has any large significance it means an interposing or interference with the autonomy of the other person or persons. And the tampering with personal drives and desires is a moral act even if its upshot is not a far-reaching one, or is a beneficial result. To seek to persuade behavior into a new direction may be wholly justifiable and the result in terms of behavior consequences may be salutary. But the judgment of benefit or detriment is not for the communicator safely to reach by himself. He is assuming a moral responsibility. And he had better be aware of the area with which he concerns himself and the responsibility he assumes. He should be willing to assert, as to any given policy, "I stand behind this as having good personal consequences for the individuals whom it will affect." That judgment speaks a moral concern and desired moral outcome.[111]

Respect the Other

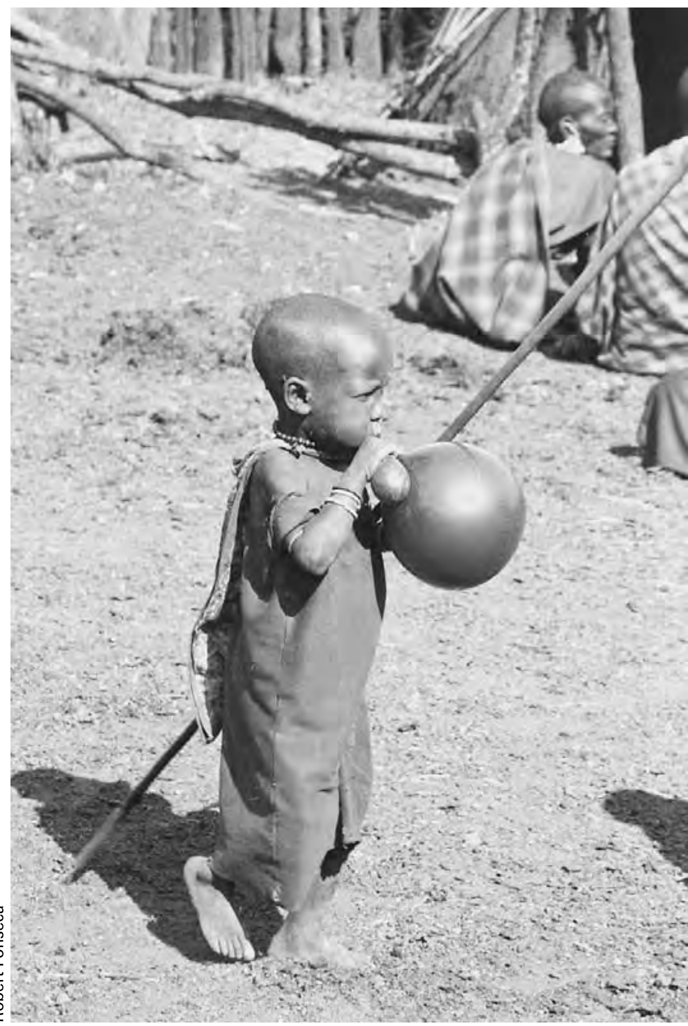
How would you feel if someone made a fool of you, put you down, or treated you as if you were insignificant? The answer is obvious: you would feel hurt. No one likes being diminished. Each and every person requires respect, dignity, and a feeling of worth. Although you have no ethical responsibility to hold everyone in high esteem, during your interactions you should display respect for the dignity and feelings of all people. Burbulies refers to this behavior as employing "the rule of reciprocity," in which you develop a "reversible and reflexive attitude and reciprocal regard for others."[112] In intercultural interactions, this means that you must reach beyond your own cultural norms and respect the norms of other cultures, rather than diminishing behavior that does not coincide with that of your own culture.

Search for Commonalities Between People and Cultures

We have spent considerable time in this book talking about cultural differences that influence intercultural communication. Yet you must not overlook the similarities among people and cultures, because those similarities can act as an ethical guide. DeGenova has some words that illustrate this suggestion:

> No matter how many differences there may be, beneath the surface there are even more similarities. It is important to try to identify the similarities among various cultures. Stripping away surface differences will uncover a multiplicity of similarities: people's hopes, aspirations, desire to survive, search for love, and need for family—to name just a few.[113]

This search for similarity is an important ethical component because it enables you to seek out important common ground that helps you decide how to treat other people,



Robert Fonseca

At the core of a meaningful ethic is the belief that all cultures share many of the same beliefs and values about children and family.

regardless of their culture. The similarities that unite people, and in a real sense make everyone part of "the global village," may range from the obvious to the subtle. For example, it is apparent that all six billion plus people inhabit the same planet for a rather short period, and that all people share the same desire to be free from external restraint: the craving for freedom is basic.

Respect Cultural Differences

Although we just finished discussing the need for you to seek out similarities between people and cultures, we also ask that you not ignore cultural differences. Think about the words of President Shimon Peres of the State of Israel when he said, "All people have the right to be equal and the equal right to be different." In short, we ask that you be respectful and tolerant of cultural differences. By developing this awareness, you will gain an intercultural ethical perspective. We want you keep in mind a recurring theme in this book: that people are both alike and different. Barnlund wrote of this double-sided nature:

> Outwardly there is little to distinguish what one sees on the streets of Osaka and Chicago—hurrying people, trolleys and buses, huge department stores, blatant billboards, skyscraper hotels, public monuments—beneath the surface there remains great distinctiveness. There is a different organization of industry, a different approach to education, a different role for labor unions, and a contrasting pattern of family life, unique law enforcement and penal practices, contrasting forms of political activity, different sex and age roles. Indeed, most of what is thought of as culture shows as many differences as similarities.[114]

Thus, a complete and honest intercultural ethical perspective both grants similarities and recognizes differences. By accepting and appreciating both, you are better able to assess the potential consequences of your communicative acts and to be more tolerant of those of others. Thomas Jefferson said much the same thing about accepting differences when he wrote, "It does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods, or no God."

Accept Responsibility for Your Behavior

Earlier we mentioned that you should be aware that communication elicits responses, and that your choice of communicative behaviors can elicit both intended and unintended responses from other people. All of your decisions, actions, and even failures to act have consequences for both yourself and countless other people. The obvious ethical consequence of this fact leads us to what the Dalai Lama has called "our universal responsibility." This relationship between making ethical choices and communication is clearly underscored by Angrosino when he points out that ethics come into play "when we act on our thoughts and our actions impinge on others."[115]

The central message is that if you are going to live in this crowded, interconnected world, and if this planet and you, one of its "temporary residents," are to survive, you must accept your individual role within that world. Remember, as we have shown throughout this book, people and cultures are inextricably linked. As the English anthropologist Gregory Bateson noted, "What pattern connects the crab to the lobster and the orchid to the primrose and all four of them to me? And me to you?"

SUMMARY

- Communication with the culturally different may lead to adverse emotional responses that trigger feelings of awkwardness and anxiety.
- Intercultural competence means having the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with members of another linguistic-cultural background.
- The basic components of communication competence are motivation, knowledge, skills, sensitivity, and character.
- Potential problems in intercultural communication include failure to recognize differences, anxiety, the desire to reduce uncertainty, stereotyping, prejudice, racism, misuse of power, ethnocentrism, and culture shock.
- To improve intercultural communication, you must know your culture, know your personal attitudes, know your communication style, monitor yourself, be empathic, be aware of cultural differences in listening, encourage feedback, develop communication flexibility, and learn about cultural adaptation.
- Venturing into a new culture can cause anxiety and emotional disturbances.
- Culture shock is a mental state that comes from the transition that occurs when you go from a familiar environment to an unfamiliar one and find that your established patterns of behavior are ineffective.
- Culture shock has four phases: excitement, disenchantment, beginning resolution, and effective functioning.
- International immigration causes culturally and ethnically diverse societies that must learn to interact with each other.
- Acculturation means dealing with issues of language, disequilibrium, and ethnocentrism.
- The stress-adaptation-growth model provides a theoretical view of cultural adaptation in which sojourners reduce the initial stress of a new cultural environment, learn to adapt to the new culture, and eventually achieve personal growth.
- Disequilibrium may be dealt with through four coping mechanisms: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization.
- Adaptation strategies include making personal contact with the host culture, learning about the host culture, and participating in cultural activities.
- Host cultures may react negatively at times to immigration because they see their familiar cities and neighborhoods being transformed into multiethnic, multicultural societies.
- Ethics focuses on appropriate behavior in interpersonal interactions, both within your own culture and when you are in another culture.
- There are two major perspectives on ethics: fundamentalism and cultural relativism.
- Messages elicit responses that may have negative consequences for the message recipient.
- It is important to have respect for others when engaged in intercultural communication.

- Searching for commonalities between people and cultures helps develop an intercultural ethic.
- Respecting cultural differences is essential to ethical intercultural communication.
- Above all else, you must accept responsibility for your communicative behavior.

ACTIVITIES

1. Locate someone from a culture different from your own, and interview him or her regarding the characteristics of a successful communicator in that culture. Include some of the following questions in your interview:
   a. What are the elements of credibility within your culture?
   b. What communicative behaviors are least desirable in your culture?
   c. What communication skills are most valued in your culture?
2. Define your communication style to the best of your ability by answering these questions:
   a. Do I give my full attention to people?
   b. Do I seem at ease or tense?
   c. Do I often change the subject without taking the other person into consideration?
   d. Do I deprecate the statements of others?
   e. Do I interrupt repeatedly?
   f. Do I show sympathy when someone has a problem?
   g. Do my actions tend to lower the other person's self-esteem?
3. Think about planning a trip to another country. What preparations would you make to minimize the effects of culture shock?
4. As a member of a host culture, what responsibilities do you believe you have to make immigrants feel comfortable in their new cultural environment?
5. In a group, discuss the components of an intercultural ethic. How would you recommend that such an ethic be internalized so that it is always present during intercultural communication?

DISCUSSION IDEAS

1. In a small group, discuss the following topic: Why is it difficult to know your own culture?
2. In a small group, discuss the following topic: Given that individual and cultural differences exist, can we ever truly empathize with another person?
3. With other class members, decide how you could best prepare to enter a new culture and deal with culture shock.
4. In a small group, discuss how might you help an immigrant who has been hired by your company adapt to living in the United States.
5. In a small group, discuss the relative merits of a fundamentalist and a relativist approach to developing an intercultural ethic.

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Chapter 2

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Chapter 11

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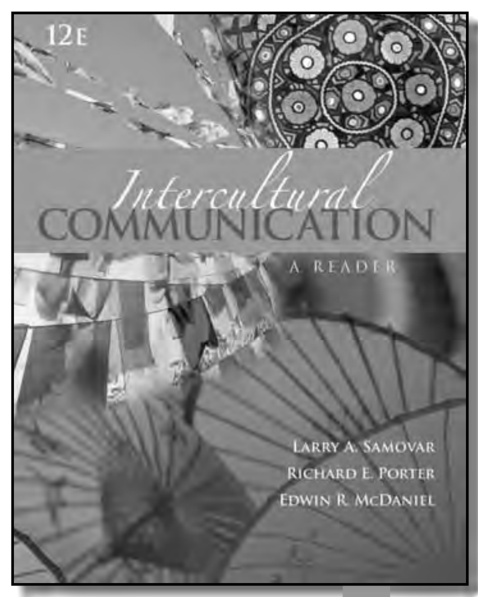

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