GT-SS3: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Dustin Dunaway
Pueblo Community College

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Intercultural Communication: GT-SS3

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Culture and Communication

1.1: Why Study Intercultural Communication?
1.2: Communication Principles and Process
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1.5: Intercultural Communication Competence

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1.1: Why Study Intercultural Communication?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, readers should:

- Understand why we study intercultural communication.
- Be able to list and describe the six imperatives.
- Explain how each imperative is related to the others.
- Identify which imperative is the most important to them.
- Explain how studying intercultural communication can lead to increased self-understanding.

We live in a rapidly changing world with larger forces driving us to interact with others who are culturally different from ourselves. National disasters, technology, business and educational opportunities are some of the many forces that lead to intercultural interaction. It would be easy to be overcome by the complexities of the things that you do not know or understand about another culture, but regardless of who we are communicating with, one fact is important to remember: *the communication choices we make determine the personal, national, and international outcomes that follow.* When we communicate well, we create happy memories, satisfying relationships, and desired outcomes. When we communicate poorly, we can create conflict, bitterness or frustration. By studying intercultural communication, you can acquire knowledge and skills to boost your communication competence, while improving your quality of life.

Figure **1.1.1**: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon meets with Mr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary, Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

This book is divided into three sections: **foundation, elements,** and **contexts**. Each section will have several smaller chapters that outline our exploration of intercultural communication. The foundation chapters include the basic principles that underlie the communication process and building blocks of culture. The element chapters explore the parts or elements that must be considered when understanding the bigger picture of intercultural communication. The context chapters show us how specific contexts or environments are impacted by the foundations and elements. As you encounter people from different cultures, an understanding of the foundations, elements, and contexts of intercultural communication studies will prove to be invaluable to your success and happiness when communicating cross-culturally.

What is your reason for studying intercultural communication? Maybe it was a requirement on the road to achieving your major, and you dutifully signed up without having given it much thought. Maybe you've spent time overseas or enjoyed spending time with an exchange student at your high school. Martin & Nakayama (2011) believe that all our varied reasons can fall into six categories that they call **imperatives.** For our purposes, an **imperative** *will be an important or compelling reason.* Martin & Nakayama (2011) identify the six **imperative** categories as peace, demographic, economic, technological, self-awareness, and ethical.

Human civilization is familiar with conflict. History is full of conflict over politics, religion, language, resources, and more. The bottom line for the **peace imperative** is a question. Can individuals of different races, ethnicities, language, and cultures co-exist on this planet? It would be naïve to assume that simply understanding intercultural communication issues would end war and conflict, but this question does underscore the need for all of us to learn more about cultural groups other than our own.

The term demographics means the **characteristics of a population**, *as classified by race, ethnicity, age, sex, income, and more.* U.S. demographics, as well as those around the world, are changing dramatically. According to the Population Reference Bureau (2019), which computes a "diversity index," the states in the US south, southwest, and west will see the biggest impact from immigration. Many of those immigrants will be economic refugees directly impacted by climate change. They will come searching for new ways to support themselves and their families. Others will be victims of violence and political instability.

The United States has an interesting history in relationship to its' immigrants. A commonly used metaphor called **the melting pot** assumes that immigrants and cultural minorities are assimilated into the US majority culture, losing their original cultures. Most researchers believe that **the melting pot** is a myth, and a better metaphor would be the **tossed salad** or rather the diversity of immigrants and minorities is still apparent, but part of a nourishing whole.

Vocabulary important to the **demographic imperative** are **heterogeneous** and **homogeneous.** If a population is considered **heterogeneous,** there are *differences in the group, culture, or population.* If a population is considered **homogeneous,** there are *similarities in the group, culture, or population.* **Diversity** is the *quality of being different.* A **nativistic** group is *extremely patriotic to the point of being anti-immigrant.*

The **demographic imperative** is not only about immigration though, it's also about an aging workforce, and economic pressure. Most families need two incomes to live what is consider a middle-class existence or to generate savings enough to retire on. As the demographics change, culture changes.

The recent trend toward **globalization** or *the creation of a world market in goods, services, labor, capital, and technology* is dramatic. To be effective in this new global market, we must understand how business is conducted in other countries and cultures because more and more of our domestic economic growth depends on global success. An accurate understanding of the economies around the world is also crucial to compete on the world stage. The bottom line when considering the **economic imperative** is the ultimate impact of globalization on the average person.

In 1967, a futurist named Marshall McLuhan coined the iconoclastic term, **global village,** which has become the vanguard for the **technology imperative.** The term *refers to a world in which communication technology unites people in remote parts of the world.* As you know, it was decades later before personal computing came into existence, but today new technology is introduced almost daily. Technology has made communication easier. Information is so easy to access and manipulate, that we are now confronted with the impact of **fake news** and purposeful **disinformation.**

Technology is not just about ease of use though, it's also about increasing contact with others. We can increase contact with people who are different than us, but we can also increase contact with people who are the same as us. In fact, research tells us that humans prefer to use technology to contact those who are **homogeneous. Diasporic groups,***ethnic and/or national groups that are geographically dispersed throughout the world,* are using technology to maintain contact as they disperse from refugee camps to host nations. Technology is also an **identity management** tool. Individuals use technology to make sense of their multiple images concerning their sense of self in different social contexts.

Communication technology has become so important and so intertwined with the economic imperative that the term, **digital divide,** has come into being. **Digital natives**, or *people who grew up using technology,* are often citizens of wealthy nations that live lives of privilege and have better economic prospects because of their technological access. People who grew up in poorer nations without technological skills and access, often have fewer economic opportunities. At the end of the last century, this idea was captured in the statement, "they live on the other side of the tracks." The other side of the train tracks referred to a less desirable location. In today's world, the "tracks" have been replaced by technology, and the **digital divide.**

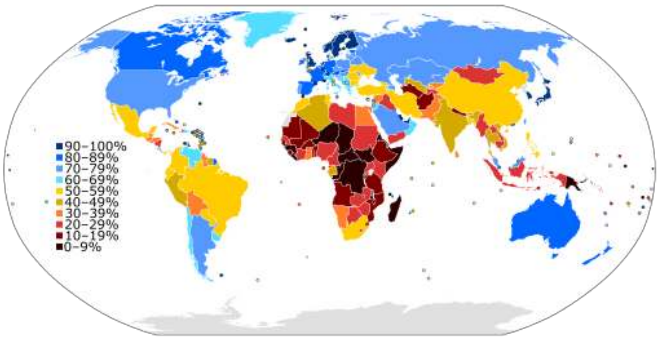

Figure 1.1.2: A world map colored to show the level of Internet penetration as of 2016

Does the digital divide lead you to ponder ethical issues of privilege and wealth? Ethics, *the principles of conduct that help govern behaviors of individuals and groups,* often create cultural questions that lead to our understanding of the **ethical imperative.** Ethical principles often arise from community consensus of what is good or bad, right or wrong, and what "ought" to be as opposed to what "is." Some ethical issues are **explicit** or clearly stated within a culture, while other are **implicit** or not clearly stated.

When pondering ethical situations and cultural mores, there are two ways humans view the situation, relativistically or universally**.** If you are a **relativist,** you believe that *no cultural pattern is inherently right or wrong, everything depends on perspective.* In other words, you might not make the same choice yourself, but are willing to understand why others would make that choice. If you are a **universalist,** you believe that *cultural differences are only superficial, and that fundamental notions of right and wrong are universal.* In other words, everyone should be making the same choices for the same reasons. Although **universalism** and **relativism** are thought of as an either/or choice (non-dualistic), realistically most people are a combination of both (dualistic). There are some issues you might hold strict opinions about while other issues you are willing to be more open about.

One of the most important reasons for studying intercultural communication is the awareness it raises of our own cultural identity and background. The **self-awareness imperative** helps us to gain insights into our own culture along with our

intercultural experiences. All cultures are **ethnocentric** by their very natures. **Ethnocentrism** is a *tendency to think that our own culture is superior to other cultures.* Most of us don't even realize that we think this way, but we do. Sure, we might admit that our culture isn't perfect, yet we still think that we're doing better than that culture to the north or south of us. Ethnocentrism can lead to stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. It will be discussed in greater depth in coming chapters.

The opposite of ethnocentrism is **self-reflexivity** or the *process of learning to understand oneself and one's position in society.* Learning about others helps us to understand ourselves. Real people with real lives struggle with decisions just like you do. They have values, and beliefs that govern their choices. Listening to the voices of people who are different can lead to different ways of seeing the world. Developing self-awareness may also lead to an increased awareness of being caught up in the political, economic, and historical systems that are not associated with an individual's choice.

As you ponder your reasons for studying intercultural communication, it is hoped that you make a conscious effort to become more aware of the communication practices of yourself and others. Much of the communication principles and theories that you learn about in this book occur at a subconscious level. As you learn more, challenge yourself to develop observation skills so you can "see" more. As you learn more, become more flexible in your interpretation of the messages that you are receiving from others. As you learn more, begin to create meaning "with" others and avoid dictating "to" others. The study of intercultural communication is the study of the variation of your story within the human story. Let's get started.

Key Vocabulary

- Imperative
- Peace
- Demographics
- Economic
- Technological
- Ethical
- Self-Awareness
- Heterogeneous
- Homogeneous
- Diversity
- Melting Pot
- Tossed Salad
- Nativistic
- Global Village
- Diasporic groups
- Identity management
- Explicit
- Implicit
- Relativity
- Universality
- Ethnocentrism
- Self-reflexivity

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1. Martin, J. N., & Nakayama, T. K. (2011). *Experiencing intercultural communication* (5th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

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1.2: Communication Principles and Process

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, readers should:

- Understand how communication meets various needs.
- Be able to define communication.
- Have a foundational understanding of the communication process.
- Be able to explain how various contexts impact communication.

Taking this course will likely change how you view communication. Most of us admit that communication is important, but it's often in the back of our minds or viewed as something that "just happens." Putting communication at the front of your mind and becoming more aware of how you communicate can be informative and have many positive effects. When I first started studying communication as an undergraduate, I began seeing the concepts we learned in class in my everyday life. When I worked in groups, I was able to apply what I had learned about group communication to improve my performance and overall experience. I also noticed interpersonal concepts and theories as I communicated within various relationships. Whether I was analyzing mediated messages or considering the ethical implications of a decision before I made it, studying communication allowed me to see more of what was going on around me, which allowed me to more actively and competently participate in various communication contexts. In this section, as we learn the principles of communication, I encourage you to take note of aspects of communication that you haven't thought about before and begin to apply the principles of communication to various parts of your life.

1.2.0.1 Communication Meets Needs

As a student with years of education experience, you know that communication is far more than the transmission of information. The exchange of messages and information is important for many reasons, but it is not enough to meet the various needs we have as human beings. While the content of our communication may help us achieve certain physical and instrumental needs, it also feeds into our identities and relationships in ways that far exceed the content of what we say.

- **Physical needs** include needs that keep our bodies and minds functioning like air, food, water, and sleep. Communication, which we most often associate with our brain, mouth, eyes, and ears, actually has many more connections to and effects on our physical body and well-being. At the most basic level, communication can alert others that our physical needs are not being met. Even babies cry when they are hungry or sick to alert their caregiver of the need to satisfy physical needs. Current research indicates that social connection has a huge impact on longevity, our immune systems, and other aspects of physical health (Seppala, et al., 2014).
- **Instrumental needs** Include needs that help us get things done in our day-to-day lives and achieve short- and long-term goals. We all have short- and long-term goals that we work on every day. Fulfilling these goals is an ongoing communicative task, which means we spend much of our time communicating for instrumental needs. Some common instrumental needs include influencing others, getting information we need, or securing support (Burleson, Metts, & Kirch, 2000). An example could be when Jeon tries to persuade his roommate to turn down his music because he is studying. In this instance, Jeon is using communication to meet an instrumental need.
- **Relational needs** include needs that help us maintain social bonds and interpersonal relationships. Communicating to fill our instrumental needs helps us function on many levels, but communicating for relational needs helps us achieve the social relating that is an essential part of being human. Communication meets our relational needs by giving us a tool through which to develop, maintain, and end relationships.
- **Identity needs** include our need to present ourselves to others and be thought of in particular and desired ways. What adjectives would you use to describe yourself? Are you funny, smart, loyal, or quirky? Your answer isn't just based on who you think you are, since much of how we think of ourselves is based on our communication with other people. Our identity changes as we progress through life, but communication is the primary means of establishing our identity and fulfilling our identity needs.

1.2.0.1 Communication Is a Process

Communication can be defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning (Pearson & Nelson, 2000. When we refer to communication as a process, we imply that it doesn't have a distinct beginning and end or follow a predetermined sequence of events. It can be difficult to trace the origin of a communication encounter, since communication doesn't always follow a neat and discernible format, which makes studying communication interactions or phenomena difficult. Any time we pull one part of the process out for study or closer examination, we artificially "freeze" the process in order to

examine it, which is not something that is possible when communicating in real life. But sometimes scholars want to isolate a particular stage in the process in order to gain insight by studying, for example, feedback or eye contact. Doing that changes the very process itself, and by the time you have examined a particular stage or component of the process, the entire process may have changed. However, these behavioral snapshots are useful for scholarly interrogation of the communication process, and they can also help us evaluate our own communication practices, troubleshoot a problematic encounter we had, or slow things down to account for various contexts before we engage in communication (Dance & Larson, 1976).

1.2.0.1 Communication Is Guided by Culture and Context

Context is a dynamic component of the communication process. Culture and context also influence how we perceive and define communication. Western culture tends to put more value on senders than receivers and on the content rather the context of a message whereas Eastern cultures tend to communicate with the listener in mind. These cultural values are reflected in our definitions and models of communication. As we will learn in later chapters, cultures vary in terms of having a more individualistic or more collectivistic cultural orientation. The United States is considered an individualistic culture, where emphasis is put on individual expression and success. Japan is considered a collectivistic culture, where emphasis is put on group cohesion and harmony. These are strong cultural values that are embedded in how we learn to communicate. In many collectivistic cultures, there is more emphasis placed on silence and nonverbal context. Whether in the United States, Japan, or another country, people are socialized from birth to communicate in culturally specific ways that vary by context.

1.2.0.1 Communication Is Learned

Most of us are born with the capacity and ability to communicate, but we all communicate differently. This is because communication is learned rather than innate. As we have already seen, communication patterns are relative to the context and culture in which one is communicating. Many cultures have distinct languages consisting of unique systems of symbols. A key principle of communication is that it is symbolic. Communication is symbolic in that the words that make up our language systems do not directly correspond to something in reality. Instead, they stand in for or symbolize something. Odgen and Richards (1923) believe that there is a triangle of meaning with “thought,” “symbol,” and “referent” in relationship.

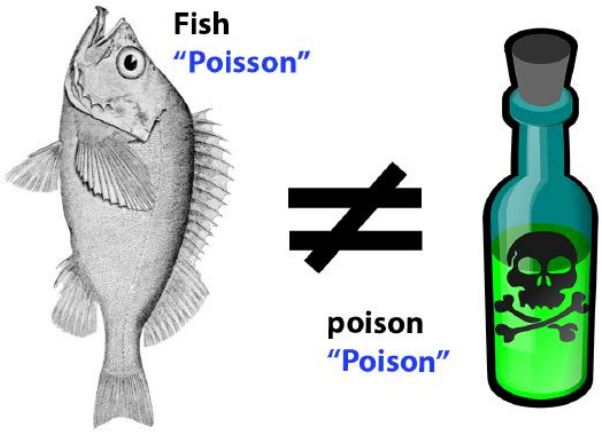

Figure **1.2.1**: fg.1 The french word Poisson means fish, but poison refers to a toxic substance. [Long Description]

The fact that communication varies so much among people, contexts, and cultures illustrates the principle that meaning is not inherent in the words we use. For example, let’s say you go to France on vacation and see the word **poisson** on the menu. Unless you know how to read French, you will not know that the symbol is the same as the English symbol **fish**. Those two words don’t look the same at all, yet they symbolize the same object. If you went by how the word looks alone, you might think that the French word for fish is more like the English word *poison* and avoid choosing that for your dinner. Putting a picture of a fish on a menu would definitely help a foreign tourist understand what they are ordering, since the picture is an actual representation of the object rather than an arbitrary symbol for it.

All symbolic communication is learned, negotiated, and dynamic. We know that the letters *b-o-o-k* refer to a bound object with multiple written pages. We also know that the letters *t-r-u-c-k* refer to a vehicle with a bed in the back for hauling things. But if we learned in school that the letters *t-r-u-c-k* referred to a bound object with written pages and *b-o-o-k* referred to a vehicle with a bed in the back, then that would make just as much sense, because the letters don’t actually refer to the object and the word itself only has the meaning that we assign to it. We will learn more, in the verbal communication chapter, about how language works, but communication is more than the words we use.

We are all socialized into different languages, but we also speak different “languages” based on the situation we are in. For example, in some cultures it is considered inappropriate to talk about family or health issues in public, but it wouldn’t be odd to overhear people in a small town grocery store in the United States talking about their children or their upcoming surgery. There are some communication patterns shared by very large numbers of people and some that are particular to a specific relationship–best friends, for example, who have their own

inside terminology and expressions that wouldn't make sense to anyone else. These examples aren't on the same scale as differing languages, but they still indicate that communication is learned. They also illustrate how rules and norms influence how we communicate. We will discuss rules and norms in communication in later chapters.

1.2.0.1 Communication Has Ethical Implications

Another culturally and situationally relative principle of communication is the fact that communication has ethical implications. **Communication ethics** deal with the process of negotiating and reflecting on our actions and communication regarding what we believe to be right and wrong. Aristotle, an important Greek philosopher and influencer of communication studies said, "In the arena of human life the honors and rewards fall to those who show their good qualities in action" (Pearson et al., 2006).

In communication ethics, we are more concerned with the decisions people make about what is right and wrong than the systems, philosophies, or religions that inform those decisions. Much of ethics is gray area. Although we talk about making decisions in terms of what is right and what is wrong, the choice is rarely that simple. Aristotle goes on to say that we should act "to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way."

Communication has broad ethical implications. When dealing with communication ethics, it's difficult to state that something is 100 percent ethical or unethical. I tell my students that we all make choices daily that are more ethical or less ethical, and we may confidently make a decision only later to learn that it wasn't the most ethical option. In such cases, our ethics and goodwill are tested, since in any given situation multiple options may seem appropriate, but we can only choose one. If, in a situation, we make a decision and we reflect on it and realize we could have made a more ethical choice, does that make us a bad person?

While many behaviors can be more easily labeled as ethical or unethical, communication isn't always as clear. Murdering someone is generally thought of as unethical and illegal, but many instances of hurtful speech, or even what some would consider hate speech, have been protected as free speech. This shows the complicated relationship between protected speech, ethical speech, and the law. In some cases, people see it as their ethical duty to communicate information that they feel is in the public's best interest. The people behind WikiLeaks, for example, have released thousands of classified documents related to wars, intelligence gathering, and diplomatic communication. WikiLeaks claims that exposing this information keeps politicians and leaders accountable and keeps the public informed, but government officials claim the release of the information should be considered a criminal act because such exposure may threaten national security. Both parties consider the other's communication unethical and their own communication ethical. Who is right?

1.2.0.1 Communication Influences Your Thinking about Yourself and Others

We all share a fundamental drive to communicate. As previously stated, communication can be defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning (Pearson & Nelson, 2000). . You share meaning in what you say and how you say it, both in oral and written forms. If you could not communicate, what would life be like? A series of never-ending frustrations? Not being able to ask for what you need, or even to understand the needs of others?

Being unable to communicate might even mean losing a part of yourself, for you communicate your **self-concept**—your sense of self and awareness of who you are—in many ways. Do you like to write? Do you find it easy to make a phone call to a stranger, or to speak to a room full of people? Do you like to work in teams and groups? Perhaps someone told you that you don't speak clearly, or your grammar needs improvement. Does that make you more or less likely to want to communicate? For some it may be a positive challenge, while for others it may be discouraging, but in all cases your ability to communicate is central to your self-concept.

Take a look at your clothes. What are the brands you are wearing? What do you think they say about you? Do you feel that certain styles of shoes, jewelry, tattoos, music, or even automobiles express who you are? Part of your self-concept may be that you express yourself through texting, or through writing longer documents like essays and research papers, or through the way you speak. Those labels and brands that you wear also in some ways communicate with your group or community. They are recognized, and to some degree, are associated with you. Just as your words represent you in writing, how you present yourself with symbols and images influences how others perceive you.

On the other side of the coin, your communication skills help you to understand others—not just their words, but also their tone of voice, their nonverbal gestures, or the format of their written documents provide you with clues about who they are and what their values and priorities may be. Your success as a communicator hinges on your ability to actively listen and accurately interpret others' messages.

1.2.0.1 Communication Influences How You Learn

When you were an infant, you learned to talk over a period of many months. There was a group of caregivers around you that talked to each other, and sometimes you, and you caught on that you could get something when you used a word correctly. Before you knew it you were speaking in sentences, with words, in a language you learned from your family or those around you. When you got older, you didn't learn to ride a bike, drive a car, or even text a message on your cell phone in one brief moment. Learning works the same way with the continuous improvement of your communication skills.

You learn to speak in public by first having conversations, then by answering questions and expressing your opinions in class, and finally by preparing and delivering a "stand-up" speech. Similarly, you learn to write by first learning to read, then by writing and learning to think critically. Your speaking and writing are reflections of your thoughts, experience, and education, and part of that combination is your level of experience listening to other speakers, reading documents and styles of writing, and studying formats similar to what you aim to produce. Speaking and writing are both key communication skills that you will use in teams and groups.

As you study communication, you may receive suggestions for improvement and clarification from professionals more experienced than yourself. Take their suggestions as challenges to improve, don't give up when your first speech or first draft does not communicate the message you intend. Stick with it until you get it right. Your success in communicating is a skill that applies to almost every field of work, and it makes a difference in your relationships with others.

Remember, luck is simply a combination of preparation and timing. You want to be prepared to communicate well when given the opportunity. Each time you do a good job, your success will bring more success.

1.2.0.1 The Communication Process

Communication is a complex process, and it is difficult to determine where or with whom a communication encounter starts and ends. For example, when you finish your best friends' sentences before they can even get the words out, who is the sender, and who is the receiver? Models of communication simplify the process by providing a visual representation of the various aspects of a communication encounter. Models allow us to see specific concepts and steps within the process of communication, define communication, and apply communication concepts. When you become aware of how communication functions, you can think more deliberately through your communication encounters, which can help you better prepare for future communication and learn from your previous communication. The three models of communication we will discuss are the transmission, interaction, and transaction models.

Although the models differ, they all contain some common elements such as participants, messages, encoding, decoding, and channels. In communication models, the **participants** are the senders and/or receivers of messages in a communication encounter. The **message** is the verbal or nonverbal content being conveyed from sender to receiver. For example, when you say "Hello!" to your friend, you are sending a message of greeting that will be received by your friend.

The internal cognitive processes that allow participants to send, receive, and understand messages are the encoding process and decoding process. **Encoding** is the process of turning thoughts into communication. As we will learn later, the level of conscious thought that goes into encoding messages varies. **Decoding** is the process of turning communication into thoughts. For example, you may realize you're hungry and encode the following message to send to your roommate: "I'm hungry. Do you want to get pizza tonight?" As your roommate receives the message, he decodes what you are expressing to him and turns it back into thoughts in order to make meaning out of it. Of course, we don't just communicate verbally—we have various options, or channels for communication. Encoded messages are sent through a **channel**, or a sensory route on which a message travels, to the receiver for decoding. While communication can be sent and received using any sensory route (sight, smell, touch, taste, or sound), most communication occurs through visual (sight) and/or auditory (sound) channels. If your roommate has headphones on and is engrossed in a video game, you may need to get his attention by waving your hands before you can ask him about dinner.

1.2.0.1 Linear Model of Communication

The **linear model of communication** describes communication as a linear, one-way process in which a sender intentionally transmits a message to a receiver (Ellis & McClintock, 1990). This model focuses on the sender and message within a communication encounter. Although the receiver is included in the model, this role is viewed as more of a target or end point rather than part of an ongoing process. We are left to presume that the receiver either successfully receives and understands the message or does not. The scholars who designed this model extended on a linear model proposed by Aristotle centuries before that included a speaker, message, and hearer. They were also influenced by the advent and spread of new communication technologies of the time such as telegraphy and radio, and you can probably see these technical influences within the model (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). Think of how a radio message is

sent from a person in the radio studio to you listening in your car. The sender is the radio announcer who encodes a verbal message that is transmitted by a radio tower through electromagnetic waves (the channel) and eventually reaches your (the receiver's) ears via an antenna and speakers in order to be decoded. The radio announcer doesn't really know if you receive his or her message or not, but if the equipment is working and the channel is free of static, then there is a good chance that the message was successfully received.

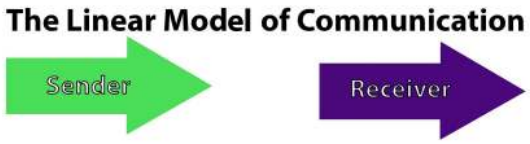

Figure **1.2.2**: This graph illustrates the linear model of communication.

Although the linear model may seem simple or even underdeveloped to us today, the creation of this model allowed scholars to examine the communication process in new ways, which eventually led to more complex models and theories of communication that we will discuss more later. This model is not quite rich enough to capture dynamic face-to-face interactions, but there are instances in which communication is one-way and linear, especially computer-mediated communication (CMC). CMC is integrated into many aspects of our lives now and has opened up new ways of communicating and brought some new challenges. Think of text messaging for example. The linear model of communication is well suited for describing the act of text messaging since the sender isn't sure that the meaning was effectively conveyed or that the message was received at all.

1.2.0.1 Interactional Model of Communication

The **interactional model of communication** describes communication as a process in which participants alternate positions as sender and receiver and generate meaning by sending messages and receiving feedback within physical and psychological contexts (Schramm et al., 1997). Rather than illustrating communication as a linear, one- way process, the interaction model incorporates feedback, which makes communication a more interactive, two- way process. **Feedback** includes messages sent in response to other messages. For example, your instructor may respond to a point you raise during class discussion or you may point to the sofa when your roommate asks you where the remote control is. The inclusion of a feedback loop also leads to a more complex understanding of the roles of participants in a communication encounter. Rather than having one sender, one message, and one receiver, this model has two sender-receivers who exchange messages. Each participant alternates roles as sender and receiver in order to keep a communication encounter going. Although this seems like a perceptible and deliberate process, we alternate between the roles of sender and receiver very quickly and often without conscious thought.

Figure **1.2.3**: This graph illustrates the interactional model of communication.

The interactional model is focused on both the message and interaction. While the linear model focused on transmitting a message, the interactional model is more concerned with the communication loop itself. Feedback and context help make the interactional model a more accurate illustration of the typical communication process, and is a powerful tool that helps us understand communication encounters.

1.2.0.1 Transactional Model of Communication

As the study of communication progressed, models expanded to account for more of the communication process. Many scholars view communication as more than a process that is used to carry on conversations and convey meaning. We don't send messages like computers, and we don't neatly alternate between the roles of sender and receiver as an interaction unfolds. We also can't consciously decide to stop communicating, because communication is more than sending and receiving messages. The transactional model differs from the linear and interactional models in significant ways, including the conceptualization of communication, the role of sender and receiver, and the role of context (Barnlund, 1970).

To review, each model incorporates a different understanding of what communication is and what communication does. The linear model views communication as a thing, like an information packet, that is sent from one place to another. From this view, communication is defined as sending and receiving messages. The interactional model views communication as an interaction in which a message is sent and then followed by a reaction (feedback), which is then followed by another reaction, and so on. From this view, communication is defined as producing conversations and interactions within physical and psychological contexts. The transactional model views communication as integrated into our social realities in such a

way that it helps us not only understand them but also create and change them.

The **transactional model of communication** describes communication as a process in which communicators generate social realities within social, relational, and cultural contexts. In this model, we don't just communicate to exchange messages; we communicate to create relationships, form intercultural alliances, shape our self-concepts, and engage with others in dialogue to create communities. In short, we don't communicate about our realities; communication helps to construct our realities.

The roles of sender and receiver in the transactional model of communication differ significantly from the other models. Instead of labeling participants as senders and receivers, the people in a communication encounter are referred to as *communicators*. Unlike the interactional model, which suggests that participants alternate positions as sender and receiver, the transactional model suggests that we are simultaneously senders and receivers. For example, on a first date, as you send verbal messages about your interests and background, your date reacts nonverbally. You don't wait until you are done sending your verbal message to start receiving and decoding the nonverbal messages of your date. Instead, you are simultaneously sending your verbal message and receiving your date's nonverbal messages. This is an important addition to the model because it allows us to understand how we are able to adapt our communication—for example, a verbal message—in the middle of sending it based on the communication we are simultaneously receiving from our communication partner.

Figure 1.2.4: This Graph illustrates the transaction model of communication.

The transactional model also includes a more complex understanding of context. The interaction model portrays context as physical and psychological influences that enhance or impede communication. While these contexts are important, they focus on message transmission and reception. Since the transaction model of communication views communication as a force that shapes our realities before and after specific interactions occur, it must account for contextual influences outside of a single interaction. To do this, the transactional model considers how social, relational, cultural, and physical contexts frame and influence our communication encounters.

- **Social context** refers to the stated rules or unstated norms that guide communication. As we are socialized into our various communities, we learn rules and implicitly pick up on norms for communicating. Some common rules that influence social contexts include don't lie to people, don't interrupt people, don't pass people in line, greet people when they greet you, thank people when they pay you a compliment, and so on. Parents and teachers often explicitly convey these rules to their children or students. Rules may be stated over and over, and there may be punishment for not following them. Norms are social conventions that we pick up on through observation, practice, and trial and error. We may not even know we are breaking a social norm until we notice people looking at us strangely or someone corrects or teases us. For example, as a new employee you may over- or underdress for the company's holiday party because you don't know the norm for formality. Although there probably isn't a stated rule about how to dress at the holiday party, you will notice your error without someone having to point it out, and you will likely not deviate from the norm again in order to save yourself any potential embarrassment. Even though breaking social norms doesn't result in the formal punishment that might be a consequence of breaking a social rule, the social awkwardness we feel when we violate social norms is usually enough to teach us that these norms are powerful even though they aren't made explicit like rules. Norms even have the power to override social rules in some situations. To go back to the examples of common social rules mentioned before, we may break the rule about not lying if the lie is meant to save someone from feeling hurt. We often interrupt close friends when we're having an exciting conversation, but we wouldn't be as likely to interrupt a professor while they are lecturing. Since norms and rules vary among people and cultures, relational and cultural contexts are also included in the transaction model in order to help us understand the multiple contexts that influence our communication.
- **Relational context** includes the previous interpersonal history and type of relationship we have with a person. We communicate differently with someone we just met versus someone we've known for a long time. Initial interactions with people tend to be more highly scripted and governed by established norms and rules, but when we have an established relational context, we may be able to bend or break social norms and rules more easily. For example, you would likely follow social norms of politeness and attentiveness and might spend the whole day cleaning the house for the first time you invite your new neighbors to visit. Once the neighbors are in your house, you may also make them the center of your attention during their visit. If

you end up becoming friends with your neighbors and establishing a relational context, you might not think as much about having everything cleaned and prepared or even giving them your whole attention during later visits. Since communication norms and rules also vary based on the type of relationship people have, relationship type is also included in relational context. For example, there are certain communication rules and norms that apply to a supervisor-supervisee relationship that don't apply to a brother-sister relationship and vice versa. Just as social norms and relational history influence how we communicate, so does culture.

- **Cultural context** includes various aspects of identities such as race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and ability. We will learn more about these identities in other chapters, but for now it is important for us to understand that whether we are aware of it or not, we all have multiple cultural identities that influence our communication. Some people, especially those with identities that have been historically marginalized, are regularly aware of how their cultural identities influence their communication and influence how others communicate with them. Conversely, people with identities that are dominant or in the majority may rarely, if ever, think about the role their cultural identities play in their communication. When cultural context comes to the forefront of a communication encounter, it can be difficult to manage. Since intercultural communication creates uncertainty, it can deter people from communicating across cultures or lead people to view intercultural communication as negative. But if you avoid communicating across cultural identities, you will likely not get more comfortable or competent as a communicator. "Difference," isn't a bad thing. In fact, intercultural communication has the potential to enrich various aspects of our lives. In order to communicate well within various cultural contexts, it is important to keep an open mind and avoid making assumptions about others' cultural identities. While you may be able to identify some aspects of the cultural context within a communication encounter, there may also be cultural influences that you can't see. A competent communicator shouldn't assume to know all the cultural contexts a person brings to an encounter, since not all cultural identities are visible. As with the other contexts, it requires skill to adapt to shifting contexts, and the best way to develop these skills is through practice and reflection.

1.2.1 Key Vocabulary

- physical needs
- relational needs
- communication ethics
- instrumental needs
- identity needs
- self-concept
- participants
- message
- encoding
- decoding
- channel
- linear communication
- interactional communication
- transactional communication
- social context
- relational context
- cultural context

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1.3: Foundations of Culture

Learning Objectives

1. Define culture.
2. Define sub and countercultures

Culture is a complicated word to define, as there are at least six common ways that culture is used in the United States. For the purposes of exploring the communicative aspects of culture, we will define culture as the ongoing negotiation of learned and patterned beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors. Unpacking the definition, we can see that culture shouldn't be conceptualized as stable and unchanging. Culture is "negotiated," and as we will learn later in this chapter, culture is dynamic, and cultural changes can be traced and analyzed to better understand why our society is the way it is. The definition also points out that culture is learned, which accounts for the importance of socializing institutions like family, school, peers, and the media. Culture is patterned in that there are recognizable widespread similarities among people within a cultural group. There is also deviation from and resistance to those patterns by individuals and subgroups within a culture, which is why cultural patterns change over time. Last, the definition acknowledges that culture influences our beliefs about what is true and false, our attitudes including our likes and dislikes, our values regarding what is right and wrong, and our behaviors. It is from these cultural influences that our identities are formed.

A more simplistic term to understand by Lustig and Koester (2018) would be *culture* is a "learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, norms and social practices, which affects the behaviors of a relatively large group of people."[i]

The first, and perhaps most crucial, elements of culture we will discuss are its values and beliefs. ***Values*** are a culture's standard for discerning what is good and just in society. Values are deeply embedded and critical for transmitting and teaching a culture's beliefs. ***Beliefs*** are the tenets or convictions that people hold to be true. Individuals in a society have specific beliefs, but they also share collective values. To illustrate the difference, Americans commonly believe in the American Dream—that anyone who works hard enough will be successful and wealthy. Underlying this belief is the American value that wealth is good and important.

Values help shape a society by suggesting what is good and bad, beautiful and ugly, sought or avoided. Consider the value that the United States places upon youth. Children represent innocence and purity, while a youthful adult appearance signifies sexuality. Shaped by this value, individuals spend millions of dollars each year on cosmetic products and surgeries to look young and beautiful. The United States also has an individualistic culture, meaning people place a high value on individuality and independence. In contrast, many other cultures are collectivist, meaning the welfare of the group and group relationships are a primary value.

Living up to a culture's values can be difficult. It's easy to value good health, but it's hard to quit smoking. Marital monogamy is valued, but many spouses engage in infidelity. Cultural diversity and equal opportunities for all people are valued in the United States, yet the country's highest political offices have been dominated by white men.

Values often suggest how people should behave, but they don't accurately reflect how people do behave. Values portray an ***ideal culture***, the standards society would like to embrace and live up to. But ideal culture differs from ***real culture***, the way society actually is, based on what occurs and exists. In an ideal culture, there would be no traffic accidents, murders, poverty, or racial tension. But in real culture, police officers, lawmakers, educators, and social workers constantly strive to prevent or repair those accidents, crimes, and injustices. American teenagers are encouraged to value celibacy. However, the number of unplanned pregnancies among teens reveals that not only is the ideal hard to live up to, but the value alone is not enough to spare teenagers the potential consequences of having sex.

One way societies strive to put values into action is through rewards, sanctions, and punishments. When people observe the norms of society and uphold its values, they are often rewarded. A boy who helps an elderly woman board a bus may receive a smile and a "thank you." A business manager who raises profit margins may receive a quarterly bonus. People ***sanction*** certain behaviors by giving their support, approval, or permission, or by instilling formal actions of disapproval and nonsupport. Sanctions are a form of ***social control***, a way to encourage conformity to cultural norms. Sometimes people conform to norms in anticipation or expectation of positive sanctions: good grades, for instance, may mean praise from parents and teachers. From a criminal justice perspective, properly used social control is also inexpensive crime control. Utilizing social control approaches pushes most people to conform to societal rules, regardless of whether authority figures (such as law enforcement) are present.

When people go against a society's values, they are punished. A boy who shoves an elderly woman aside to board the bus first

may receive frowns or even a scolding from other passengers. A business manager who drives away customers will likely be fired. Breaking norms and rejecting values can lead to cultural sanctions such as earning a negative label—lazy, no-good bum—or to legal sanctions, such as traffic tickets, fines, or imprisonment.

Figure **1.3.1**: In many parts of Africa and the Middle East, it is considered normal for men to hold hands in friendship. How would Americans react to these two soldiers? (Photo courtesy of Geordie Mott/Wikimedia Commons)

Values are not static; they vary across time and between groups as people evaluate, debate, and change collective societal beliefs. Values also vary from culture to culture. For example, cultures differ in their values about what kinds of physical closeness are appropriate in public. It's rare to see two male friends or coworkers holding hands in the United States where that behavior often symbolizes romantic feelings. But in many nations, masculine physical intimacy is considered natural in public. This difference in cultural values came to light when people reacted to photos of former president George W. Bush holding hands with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia in 2005. A simple gesture, such as hand-holding, carries great symbolic differences across cultures.[ii]

1.3.1 Norms

Many examples of culture often describe how people are expected to behave in certain situations—for example, when buying food or boarding a bus. These examples describe the visible and invisible rules of conduct through which societies are structured, or what sociologists call norms. ***Norms*** define how to behave in accordance with what a society has defined as good, right, and important, and most members of the society adhere to them.

Formal norms are established, written rules. They are behaviors worked out and agreed upon in order to suit and serve the most people. Laws are formal norms, but so are employee manuals, college entrance exam requirements, and "no running" signs at swimming pools. Formal norms are the most specific and clearly stated of the various types of norms, and they are the most strictly enforced. But even formal norms are enforced to varying degrees and are reflected in cultural values.

For example, money is highly valued in the United States, so monetary crimes are punished. It's against the law to rob a bank, and banks go to great lengths to prevent such crimes. People safeguard valuable possessions and install antitheft devices to protect homes and cars. A less strictly enforced social norm is driving while intoxicated. While it's against the law to drive drunk, drinking is for the most part an acceptable social behavior. And though there are laws to punish drunk driving, there are few systems in place to prevent the crime. These examples show a range of enforcement in formal norms.

There are plenty of formal norms, but the list of ***informal norms***—casual behaviors that are generally and widely conformed to—is longer. People learn informal norms by observation, imitation, and general socialization. Some informal norms are taught directly—"Kiss your Aunt Edna" or "Use your napkin"—while others are learned by observation, including observations of the consequences when someone else violates a norm. But although informal norms define personal interactions, they extend into other systems as well. In the United States, there are informal norms regarding behavior at fast food restaurants. Customers line up to order their food and leave when they are done. They don't sit down at a table with strangers, sing loudly as they prepare their condiments, or nap in a booth. Most people don't commit even benign breaches of informal norms. Informal norms dictate appropriate behaviors without the need of written rules.

Norms may be further classified as either mores or folkways. ***Mores*** (mor-ays) are norms that embody the moral views and principles of a group. Violating them can have serious consequences. The strongest mores are legally protected with laws or other formal norms. In the United States, for instance, murder is considered immoral, and it's punishable by law (a formal norm). But more often, mores are judged and guarded by public sentiment (an informal norm). People who violate mores are seen as shameful. They can even be shunned or banned from some groups. The mores of the U.S. school system require that a student's writing be in the student's own words or use special forms (such as quotation marks and a whole system of citation) for crediting other writers. Writing another person's words as if they are one's own has a name—plagiarism. The consequences for violating this norm are severe and usually result in expulsion.

Unlike mores, ***folkways*** are norms without any moral underpinnings. Rather, folkways direct appropriate behavior in the day-to-day practices and expressions of a culture. They indicate whether to shake hands or kiss on the cheek when greeting another person. They specify whether to wear a tie and blazer or a T-shirt and sandals to an event. In Canada, women can smile and say hello to men on the street. In Egypt, that's not acceptable. In regions in the southern United States, bumping into an acquaintance means stopping to chat. It's considered

rude not to, no matter how busy one is. In other regions, people guard their privacy and value time efficiency. A simple nod of the head is enough. Other accepted folkways in the United States may include holding the door open for a stranger or giving someone a gift on their birthday. The rules regarding these folkways may change from culture to culture.

Many folkways are actions we take for granted. People need to act without thinking in order to get seamlessly through daily routines; they can't stop and analyze every action (Sumner 1906). Those who experience culture shock may find that it subsides as they learn the new culture's folkways and are able to move through their daily routines more smoothly. Folkways might be small manners, learned by observation and imitated, but they are by no means trivial. Like mores and laws, these norms help people negotiate their daily lives within a given culture.[iii]

The last aspect of culture we will mention is social practices. *Social practices* are the predictable behavior patterns members of a cultural group tend to follow. The simple activity of children going to school each morning Monday-Friday is an example of a social norm in the United States. When combined these beliefs, values, norms and social practices create a way of living for those members.[iv]

1.3.2 Subcultures & Countercultures[v]

Now that you have a better understanding of culture and what it entails, lets briefly discuss co-cultures.

Figure **1.3.2**: Trekkies (or fans of Star Trek) are a subculture; they share specific understandings and meanings that those outside their subculture may not understand. Image by V Threepio is used under a CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

A ***subculture*** is a culture shared and actively participated in by a minority of people within a broader culture. A culture often contains numerous subcultures. Subcultures incorporate large parts of the broader cultures of which they are part, but in specifics they may differ radically. Some subcultures achieve such a status that they acquire a name of their own. Examples of subcultures could include: bikers, military culture, Bronies, and Star Trek fans (trekkers or trekkies).

Figure Runaway argument for \eatSpaces?: The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (or FLDS), advocates the practice polygamy, making members part of a countercultural group (polygamy is illegal in the United States). FLDS Eldorado by Randy Mankin is in the public domain.

A ***counterculture*** is a subculture with the addition that some of its beliefs, values, or norms challenge or even contradict those of the main culture of which it is part.[12] Examples of countercultures in the U.S. could include: the hippie movement of the 1960s, the green movement, polygamists, feminist groups, BDSM Communities, and LGBTQ communities.

Subcultures bring together like-minded individuals who feel neglected by societal standards and allow them to develop a sense of identity.[13] Subcultures can be distinctive because of the age, ethnicity, class, location, and/or gender of the members. The qualities that determine a subculture as distinct may be linguistic, aesthetic, religious, political, sexual, geographical, or a combination of factors. Members of a subculture often signal their membership through a distinctive and symbolic use of style, which includes fashions, mannerisms, and argot.[13]

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[i] Stokes-Rice, 2019

[ii] https://courses.lumenlearning.com/alamo-sociology/chapter/values-and-beliefs/

[iii] https://courses.lumenlearning.com/alamo-sociology/chapter/values-and-beliefs/

[iv] Stokes-Rice, 2019

[v] https://www.oercommons.org/courses/introduction-to-sociology/view

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1.4: Understanding Intercultural Communication

Learning Objectives

- Define intercultural communication.
- List and summarize the six dialectics of intercultural communication.
- Discuss how intercultural communication affects interpersonal relationships.

It is through intercultural communication that we come to create, understand, and transform culture and identity. Intercultural communication is communication between people with differing cultural identities. One reason we should study intercultural communication is to foster greater self-awareness (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Our thought process regarding culture is often "other focused," meaning that the culture of the other person or group is what stands out in our perception. However, the old adage "know thyself" is appropriate, as we become more aware of our own culture by better understanding other cultures and perspectives. Intercultural communication can allow us to step outside of our comfortable, usual frame of reference and see our culture through a different lens. Additionally, as we become more self-aware, we may also become more ethical communicators as we challenge our ethnocentrism, or our tendency to view our own culture as superior to other cultures.

As was noted earlier, difference matters, and studying intercultural communication can help us better negotiate our changing world. Changing economies and technologies intersect with culture in meaningful ways (Martin & Nakayama). Technology has created for some a global village where vast distances are now much shorter due to new technology that make travel and communication more accessible and convenient (McLuhan, 1967). However, as the following "Getting Plugged In" box indicates, there is also a digital divide, which refers to the unequal access to technology and related skills that exists in much of the world. People in most fields will be more successful if they are prepared to work in a globalized world. Obviously, the global market sets up the need to have intercultural competence for employees who travel between locations of a multinational corporation. Perhaps less obvious may be the need for teachers to work with students who do not speak English as their first language and for police officers, lawyers, managers, and medical personnel to be able to work with people who have various cultural identities.

?

***Think About It . . .* "Getting Plugged In" - The Digital Divide**

Many people who are now college age struggle to imagine a time without cell phones and the Internet. As "digital natives" it is probably also surprising to realize the number of people who do not have access to certain technologies. The *digital divide* was a term that initially referred to gaps in access to computers. The term expanded to include access to the Internet since it exploded onto the technology scene and is now connected to virtually all computing (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2010). Approximately two billion people around the world now access the Internet regularly, and those who don't face several disadvantages (Smith, 2011). Discussions of the digital divide are now turning more specifically to high-speed Internet access, and the discussion is moving beyond the physical access divide to include the skills divide, the economic opportunity divide, and the democratic divide. This divide doesn't just exist in developing countries; it has become an increasing concern in the United States. This is relevant to cultural identities because there are already inequalities in terms of access to technology based on age, race, and class (Sylvester & McGlynn, 2010). Scholars argue that these continued gaps will only serve to exacerbate existing cultural and social inequalities. From an international perspective, the United States is falling behind other countries in terms of access to high-speed Internet. South Korea, Japan, Sweden, and Germany now all have faster average connection speeds than the United States (Smith, 2011). And Finland in 2010 became the first country in the world to declare that all its citizens have a legal right to broadband Internet access (ben-Aaron, 2010). People in rural areas in the United States are especially disconnected from broadband service, with about 11 million rural Americans unable to get the service at home. As so much of our daily lives go online, it puts those who aren't connected at a disadvantage. From paying bills online, to interacting with government services, to applying for jobs, to taking online college classes, to researching and participating in political and social causes, the Internet connects to education, money, and politics.

1. What do you think of Finland's inclusion of broadband access as a legal right? Is this something that should be done in other countries? Why or why not?
2. How does the digital divide affect the notion of the global village?
3. How might limited access to technology negatively affect various nondominant groups?

1.4.1 Intercultural Communication: A Dialectical Approach

Intercultural communication is complicated, messy, and at times contradictory. Therefore it is not always easy to conceptualize or study. Taking a dialectical approach allows us to capture the dynamism of intercultural communication. A dialectic is a relationship between two opposing concepts that constantly push and pull one another (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). To put it another way, thinking dialectically helps us realize that our experiences often occur in between two different phenomena. This perspective is especially useful for interpersonal and intercultural communication, because when we think dialectically, we think relationally. This means we look at the relationship between aspects of intercultural communication rather than viewing them in isolation. Intercultural communication occurs as a dynamic in-betweenness that, while connected to the individuals in an encounter, goes beyond the individuals, creating something unique. Holding a dialectical perspective may be challenging for some Westerners, as it asks us to hold two contradictory ideas simultaneously, which goes against much of what we are taught in our formal education. Thinking dialectically helps us see the complexity in culture and

identity because it doesn't allow for dichotomies. Dichotomies are dualistic ways of thinking that highlight opposites, reducing the ability to see gradations that exist in between concepts. Dichotomies such as good/evil, wrong/right, objective/subjective, male/female, in-group/out-group, black/white, and so on form the basis of much of our thoughts on ethics, culture, and general philosophy, but this isn't the only way of thinking (Marin & Nakayama, 1999). Many Eastern cultures acknowledge that the world isn't dualistic. Rather, they accept as part of their reality that things that seem opposite are actually interdependent and complement each other. I argue that a dialectical approach is useful in studying intercultural communication because it gets us out of our comfortable and familiar ways of thinking. Since so much of understanding culture and identity is understanding ourselves, having an unfamiliar lens through which to view culture can offer us insights that our familiar lenses will not. Specifically, we can better understand intercultural communication by examining six dialectics (see Figure 6.1 "Dialectics of Intercultural Communication") (Martin & Nakayama, 1999).

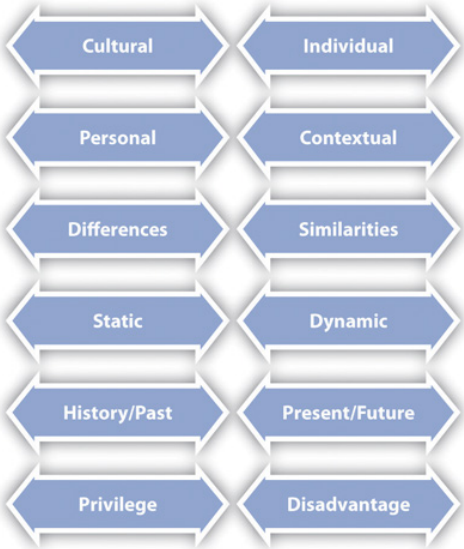

Figure 6.1: Dialectics of Intercultural Communication. Source: Adapted from Judith N. Martin and Thomas K. Nakayama, "Thinking Dialectically about Culture and Communication," Communication Theory 9, no. 1 (1999): 1–25.

The cultural-individual dialectic captures the interplay between patterned behaviors learned from a cultural group and individual behaviors that may be variations on or counter to those of the larger culture. This dialectic is useful because it helps us account for exceptions to cultural norms. For example, earlier we learned that the United States is said to be a low-context culture, which means that we value verbal communication as our primary, meaning-rich form of communication. Conversely, Japan is said to be a high-context culture, which means they often look for nonverbal clues like tone, silence, or what is not said for meaning. However, you can find people in the United States who intentionally put much meaning into *how* they say things, perhaps because they are not as comfortable speaking directly what's on their mind. We often do this in situations where we may hurt someone's feelings or damage a relationship. Does that mean we come from a high-context culture? Does the Japanese man who speaks more than is socially acceptable come from a low-context culture? The answer to both questions is no. Neither the behaviors of a small percentage of individuals nor occasional situational choices constitute a cultural pattern.

The personal-contextual dialectic highlights the connection between our personal patterns of and preferences for communicating and how various contexts influence the personal. In some cases, our communication patterns and preferences will stay the same across many contexts. In other cases, a context shift may lead us to alter our communication and adapt. For example, an American businesswoman may prefer to communicate with her employees in an informal and laid-back manner. When she is promoted to manage a department in her company's office in Malaysia, she may again prefer to communicate with her new Malaysian employees the same way she did with those in the United States. In the United States, we know that there are some accepted norms that communication in work contexts is more formal than in personal contexts. However, we also know that individual managers often adapt these expectations to suit their own personal tastes. This type of managerial discretion would likely not go over as well in Malaysia where there is a greater emphasis put on power distance (Hofstede, 1991). So while the American manager may not know to adapt to the new context unless she has a high degree of intercultural communication competence, Malaysian managers would realize that this is an instance where the context likely influences communication more than personal preferences.

The differences-similarities dialectic allows us to examine how we are simultaneously similar to and different from others. As was noted earlier, it's easy to fall into a view of intercultural communication as "other oriented" and set up dichotomies between "us" and "them." When we overfocus on differences, we can end up polarizing groups that actually have things in common. When we overfocus on similarities, we essentialize, or reduce/overlook important variations within a group. This tendency is evident in most of the popular, and some of the academic, conversations regarding "gender differences." The book *Men Are from Mars and Women Are from Venus* makes it seem like men and women aren't even species that hail from the same planet. The media is quick to include a blurb from a

research study indicating again how men and women are "wired" to communicate differently. However, the overwhelming majority of current research on gender and communication finds that while there are differences between how men and women communicate, there are far more similarities (Allen, 2011). Even the language we use to describe the genders sets up dichotomies. That's why I suggest that my students use the term *other gender* instead of the commonly used *opposite sex*. I have a mom, a sister, and plenty of female friends, and I don't feel like any of them are the opposite of me. Perhaps a better title for a book would be *Women and Men Are Both from Earth*.

The static-dynamic dialectic suggests that culture and communication change over time yet often appear to be and are experienced as stable. Although it is true that our cultural beliefs and practices are rooted in the past, we have already discussed how cultural categories that most of us assume to be stable, like race and gender, have changed dramatically in just the past fifty years. Some cultural values remain relatively consistent over time, which allows us to make some generalizations about a culture. For example, cultures have different orientations to time. The Chinese have a longer-term orientation to time than do Europeans (Lustig & Koester, 2006). This is evidenced in something that dates back as far as astrology. The Chinese zodiac is done annually (The Year of the Monkey, etc.), while European astrology was organized by month (Taurus, etc.). While this cultural orientation to time has been around for generations, as China becomes more Westernized in terms of technology, business, and commerce, it could also adopt some views on time that are more short term.

The history/past-present/future dialectic reminds us to understand that while current cultural conditions are important and that our actions now will inevitably affect our future, those conditions are not without a history. We always view history through the lens of the present. Perhaps no example is more entrenched in our past and avoided in our present as the history of slavery in the United States.

Figure 6.2: There has been controversy over whether the Confederate flag is a symbol of hatred or a historical symbol that acknowledges the time of the Civil War. Jim Surkamp – Confederate Rebel Flag – CC BY-NC 2.0.

I remember an instance in a history class where we were discussing slavery and the subject of repatriation, or compensation for descendants of slaves, came up. A white male student in the class proclaimed, "I've never owned slaves. Why should I have to care about this now?" While his statement about not owning slaves is valid, it doesn't acknowledge that effects of slavery still linger today and that the repercussions of such a long and unjust period of our history don't disappear over the course of a few generations.

The privileges-disadvantages dialectic captures the complex interrelation of unearned, systemic advantages and disadvantages that operate among our various identities. As was discussed earlier, our society consists of dominant and nondominant groups. Our cultures and identities have certain privileges and/or disadvantages. To understand this dialectic, we must view culture and identity through a lens of intersectionality, which asks us to acknowledge that we each have multiple cultures and identities that intersect with each other. Because our identities are complex, no one is completely privileged and no one is completely disadvantaged. For example, while we may think of a white, heterosexual male as being very privileged, he may also have a disability that leaves him without the able-bodied privilege that a Latina woman has. This is often a difficult dialectic for my students to understand, because they are quick to point out exceptions that they think challenge this notion. For example, many people like to point out Oprah Winfrey as a powerful African American woman. While she is definitely now quite privileged despite her disadvantaged identities, her trajectory isn't the norm. When we view privilege and disadvantage at the cultural level, we cannot let individual exceptions distract from the systemic and institutionalized ways in which some people in our society are disadvantaged while others are privileged.

As these dialectics reiterate, culture and communication are complex systems that intersect with and diverge from many contexts. A better understanding of all these dialectics helps us be more critical thinkers and competent communicators in a changing world.

***Think About It . . .* "Getting Critical" - Immigration, Laws, and Religion**

France, like the United States, has a constitutional separation between church and state. As many countries in Europe, including France, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, have experienced influxes of immigrants, many of them Muslim, there have been growing tensions among immigration, laws, and religion. In 2011, France passed a law banning the wearing of a *niqab* (pronounced *knee-cobb*), which is an Islamic facial covering worn by some women that only exposes the eyes. This law was aimed at "assimilating its Muslim population" of more than five million people and "defending French values and women's rights" (De La Baume & Goodman, 2011). Women found wearing the veil can now be cited and fined $150 euros. Although the law went into effect in April of 2011, the first fines were issued in late September of 2011. Hind Ahmas, a woman who was fined, says she welcomes the punishment because she wants to challenge the law in the European Court of Human Rights. She also stated that she respects French laws but cannot abide by this one. Her choice to wear the veil has been met with more than a fine. She recounts how she has been denied access to banks and other public buildings and was verbally harassed by a woman on the street and then punched in the face by the woman's husband. Another Muslim woman named Kenza Drider, who can be seen in Video Clip 8.2, announced that she will run for the presidency of France in order to challenge the law. The bill that contained the law was broadly supported by politicians and the public in France, and similar laws are already in place in Belgium and are being proposed in Italy, Austria, the Netherlands, and Switzerland (Fraser, 2011).

1. Some people who support the law argue that part of integrating into Western society is showing your face. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
2. Part of the argument for the law is to aid in the assimilation of Muslim immigrants into French society. What are some positives and negatives of this type of assimilation?
3. Identify which of the previously discussed dialectics can be seen in this case. How do these dialectics capture the tensions involved?

***Think About It . . .* Veiled Woman Eyes French Presidency**

Watch this news clip that covers a French presidential hopeful in 2011. Would you be inclined to vote for this person? Why or why not?

1.4.1.1 Intercultural Communication and Relationships

Intercultural relationships are formed between people with different cultural identities and include friends, romantic partners, family, and coworkers. Intercultural relationships have benefits and drawbacks. Some of the benefits include increasing cultural knowledge, challenging previously held stereotypes, and learning new skills (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). For example, I learned about the Vietnamese New Year celebration Tet from a friend I made in graduate school. This same friend also taught me how to make some delicious Vietnamese foods that I continue to cook today. I likely would not have gained this cultural knowledge or skill without the benefits of my intercultural friendship. Intercultural relationships also present challenges, however.

The dialectics discussed earlier affect our intercultural relationships. The similarities-differences dialectic in particular may present challenges to relationship formation (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). While differences between people's cultural identities may be obvious, it takes some effort to uncover commonalities that can form the basis of a relationship. Perceived differences in general also create anxiety and uncertainty that is not as present in intracultural relationships. Once some similarities are found, the tension within the dialectic begins to balance out and uncertainty and anxiety lessen. Negative stereotypes may also hinder progress toward relational development, especially if the individuals are not open to adjusting their preexisting beliefs. Intercultural relationships may also take more work to nurture and maintain. The benefit of increased cultural awareness is often achieved, because the relational partners explain their cultures to each other. This type of explaining requires time, effort, and patience and may be an extra burden that some are not willing to carry. Last, engaging in intercultural relationships can lead to questioning or even backlash from one's own group. I experienced this type of backlash from my white classmates in middle school who teased me for hanging out with the African American kids on my bus. While these challenges range from mild inconveniences to more serious repercussions, they are important to be aware of. As noted earlier, intercultural relationships can take many forms. The focus of this section is on friendships and romantic relationships, but much of the following discussion can be extended to other relationship types.

1.4.1.1.1 Friendships

Even within the United States, views of friendship vary based on cultural identities. Research on friendship has shown that Latinos/as value relational support and positive feedback, Asian Americans emphasize exchanges of ideas like offering feedback or asking for guidance, African Americans value respect and mutual acceptance, and European Americans value recognition of each other as individuals (Coller, 1996). Despite the differences in emphasis, research also shows that the overall definition of a close friend is similar across cultures. A close friend is thought of as someone who is helpful and nonjudgmental, who you enjoy spending time with but can also be independent, and who shares similar interests and personality traits (Lee, 2006).

Intercultural friendship formation may face challenges that other friendships do not. Prior intercultural experience and overcoming language barriers increase the likelihood of intercultural friendship formation (Sias et al., 2008). In some cases, previous intercultural experience, like studying abroad in college or living in a diverse place, may motivate someone to pursue intercultural friendships once they are no longer in that context. When friendships cross nationality, it may be necessary

to invest more time in common understanding, due to language barriers. With sufficient motivation and language skills, communication exchanges through self-disclosure can then further relational formation. Research has shown that individuals from different countries in intercultural friendships differ in terms of the topics and depth of self-disclosure, but that as the friendship progresses, self-disclosure increases in depth and breadth (Chen & Nakazawa, 2009). Further, as people overcome initial challenges to initiating an intercultural friendship and move toward mutual self-disclosure, the relationship becomes more intimate, which helps friends work through and move beyond their cultural differences to focus on maintaining their relationship. In this sense, intercultural friendships can be just as strong and enduring as other friendships (Lee, 2006).

The potential for broadening one's perspective and learning more about cultural identities is not always balanced, however. In some instances, members of a dominant culture may be more interested in sharing their culture with their intercultural friend than they are in learning about their friend's culture, which illustrates how context and power influence friendships (Lee, 2006). A research study found a similar power dynamic, as European Americans in intercultural friendships stated they were open to exploring everyone's culture but also communicated that culture wasn't a big part of their intercultural friendships, as they just saw their friends as people. As the researcher states, "These types of responses may demonstrate that it is easiest for the group with the most socioeconomic and socio-cultural power to ignore the rules, assume they have the power as individuals to change the rules, or assume that no rules exist, since others are adapting to them rather than vice versa" (Collier, 1996). Again, intercultural friendships illustrate the complexity of culture and the importance of remaining mindful of your communication and the contexts in which it occurs.

1.4.1.1.2 Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships are influenced by society and culture, and still today some people face discrimination based on who they love. Specifically, sexual orientation and race affect societal views of romantic relationships. Although the United States, as a whole, is becoming more accepting of gay and lesbian relationships, there is still a climate of prejudice and discrimination that individuals in same-gender romantic relationships must face. Despite some physical and virtual meeting places for gay and lesbian people, there are challenges for meeting and starting romantic relationships that are not experienced for most heterosexual people (Peplau & Spalding, 2000).

As we've already discussed, romantic relationships are likely to begin due to merely being exposed to another person at work, through a friend, and so on. But some gay and lesbian people may feel pressured into or just feel more comfortable not disclosing or displaying their sexual orientation at work or perhaps even to some family and friends, which closes off important social networks through which most romantic relationships begin. This pressure to refrain from disclosing one's gay or lesbian sexual orientation in the workplace is not unfounded, as it is still legal in twenty-nine states (as of November 2012) to fire someone for being gay or lesbian (Human Rights Campaign, 2012). There are also some challenges faced by gay and lesbian partners regarding relationship termination. Gay and lesbian couples do not have the same legal and societal resources to manage their relationships as heterosexual couples; for example, gay and lesbian relationships are not legally recognized in most states, it is more difficult for a gay or lesbian couple to jointly own property or share custody of children than heterosexual couples, and there is little public funding for relationship counseling or couples therapy for gay and lesbian couples.

While this lack of barriers may make it easier for gay and lesbian partners to break out of an unhappy or unhealthy relationship, it could also lead couples to termination who may have been helped by the sociological support systems available to heterosexuals (Peplau & Spalding, 2000).

Despite these challenges, relationships between gay and lesbian people are similar in other ways to those between heterosexuals. Gay, lesbian, and heterosexual people seek similar qualities in a potential mate, and once relationships are established, all these groups experience similar degrees of relational satisfaction (Peplau & Spalding, 2000). Despite the myth that one person plays the man and one plays the woman in a relationship, gay and lesbian partners do not have set preferences in terms of gender role. In fact, research shows that while women in heterosexual relationships tend to do more of the housework, gay and lesbian couples were more likely to divide tasks so that each person has an equal share of responsibility (Peplau & Spalding, 2000). A gay or lesbian couple doesn't necessarily constitute an intercultural relationship, but as we have already discussed, sexuality is an important part of an individual's identity and connects to larger social and cultural systems. Keeping in mind that identity and culture are complex, we can see that gay and lesbian relationships can also be intercultural if the partners are of different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

While interracial relationships have occurred throughout history, there have been more historical taboos in the United States regarding relationships between African Americans and white people than other racial groups. Anti-miscegenation laws were

common in states and made it illegal for people of different racial/ethnic groups to marry. It wasn't until 1967 that the Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Loving versus Virginia*, declaring these laws to be unconstitutional (Pratt, 1995). It wasn't until 1998 and 2000, however, that South Carolina and Alabama removed such language from their state constitutions (Lovingday.org, 2011). The organization and website lovingday.org commemorates the landmark case and works to end racial prejudice through education.

Even after these changes, there were more Asian-white and Latino/a-white relationships than there were African American–white relationships (Gaines Jr. & Brennan, 2011). Having already discussed the importance of similarity in attraction to mates, it's important to note that partners in an interracial relationship, although culturally different, tend to be similar in occupation and income. This can likely be explained by the situational influences on our relationship formation we discussed earlier—namely, that work tends to be a starting ground for many of our relationships, and we usually work with people who have similar backgrounds to us.

There has been much research on interracial couples that counters the popular notion that partners may be less satisfied in their relationships due to cultural differences. In fact, relational satisfaction isn't significantly different for interracial partners, although the challenges they may face in finding acceptance from other people could lead to stressors that are not as strong for intracultural partners (Gaines Jr. & Brennan, 2011). Although partners in interracial relationships certainly face challenges, there are positives. For example, some mention that they've experienced personal growth by learning about their partner's cultural background, which helps them gain alternative perspectives. Specifically, white people in interracial relationships have cited an awareness of and empathy for racism that still exists, which they may not have been aware of before (Gaines Jr. & Liu, 2000).

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1.5: Intercultural Communication Competence

Learning Objectives

1. Define intercultural communication competence.
2. Explain how motivation, self- and other-knowledge, and tolerance for uncertainty relate to intercultural communication competence.
3. Summarize the three ways to cultivate intercultural communication competence that are discussed.
4. Apply the concept of “thinking under the influence” as a reflective skill for building intercultural communication competence.

Throughout this book we have been putting various tools in our communication toolbox to improve our communication competence. Many of these tools can be translated into intercultural contexts. While building any form of competence requires effort, building intercultural communication competence often requires us to take more risks. Some of these risks require us to leave our comfort zones and adapt to new and uncertain situations. In this section, we will learn some of the skills needed to be an interculturally competent communicator. Before we do, it is important to understand the United States has a blending of cultural groups. We use metaphors to understand the cultural mix of the United States. Common metaphors we use are the melting pot, a set of tributaries, a tapestry, and a garden salad. [i]

1.5.1 **Metaphors[ii]**

The Melting Pot Metaphor- "is a metaphor for a heterogeneous society becoming more homogeneous, the different elements "melting together" into a harmonious whole with a common culture. It is particularly used to describe the assimilation of immigrants to the United States; the melting-together metaphor was in use by the 1780s."

Figure **1.5.1**: The American Melting Pot. Source.

1.5.1.1 The Tributaries Metaphor

"A currently popular metaphor for describing the mix of cultures in the United States is that of tributaries or tributary streams. America, according to this image, is like a huge cultural watershed, providing numerous paths in which the many tributary cultures can flow. The tributaries maintain their unique identities as they surge toward their common destination."

1.5.1.2 The Tapestry Metaphor

A tapestry is a decorative cloth made up of many strands of thread. The threads are woven together into an artistic design that may be pleasing to some but not to others. Each thread is akin to a person, and groups of similar threads are analogous to a culture. Of course, the types of threads differ in many ways; their thickness, smoothness, color, texture, and strength may vary.

1.5.1.3 The Garden Salad Metaphor

Like a garden salad made up of many distinct ingredients that are being tossed continuously, some see the United States as made up of a complex array of distinct cultures that are blended into a unique, and one hopes tasteful, mixture.

These metaphors help us understand what happens as individuals and their cultures assimilate into the national culture. Before this assimilation occurs, individuals will most likely experience culture shock.[iii]

1.5.2 Culture Shock

Culture shock is “a sense of confusion and uncertainty sometimes with feelings of anxiety that may affect people exposed to an alien culture or environment without adequate preparation” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

Anthropologist Kalervo Oberg provided an early explanation of the term at a presentation to the Women’s Club of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on August 3, 1954.

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 situations of daily life: when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and when to refuse invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not. 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 our efficiency on hundreds of these cues, most of which we do not carry on the level of conscious awareness.[iv]

1.5.2.1 Stages of Culture Shock[v]

1. The Honeymoon Stage

The first stage of culture shock is often overwhelmingly positive and individuals become infatuated with the culture and all of its differences from the person's original culture; including language, people, food , social practices, etc. Individuals may find they just want to stay in the culture "forever."

2. The Frustration Stage

At this stage, individuals feel tired of not being able to understanding the verbal and nonverbal communication and miscommunication can happen frequently.

3. The Adjustment Stage

Frustrations begin to decrease as individuals become more familiar with the culture (beliefs, values, norms, social practices). There may even be beginning feelings of slight assimilation into the culture.

4. The Acceptance Stage

In this final stage, individual understand the new culture a little better and are feeling more comfortable in the communication interactions. To feel more at ease in the new culture, individuals may make an effort to begin the adaptation process.

1.5.2.2 Adaptation

Acculturation is the process by which immigrant people adjust and adapt their way of life to the host culture. Once in the U.S., they realize that they have to make some adjustments in order to experience success in their daily interactions with members of the mainstream society.

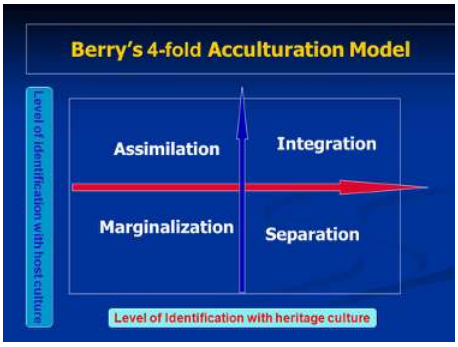

Figure 1.5.2: 4-Fold Acculturation Model.

Assimilation is the process by which people from different cultures are acculturated and ultimately absorbed into the mainstream culture. In much of the U.S. history of immigration throughout the 18th, 19th, and early 20th Centuries, assimilation was more or less forced toward the deeply British-influenced mainstream culture systems.

Cultural *integration* is a form of cultural exchange in which one group assumes the beliefs, practices and rituals of another group without sacrificing the characteristics of its own culture**.** While cultural syncretism carries a negative connotation, cultural integration is generally looked upon as positive because nothing is lost. Seen from this light, cultural integration is a healthy intermingling of the beliefs and rituals of two unique cultures.[vi]

Separation occurs when individuals reject the dominant or host culture in favor of preserving their culture of origin. Separation is often facilitated by immigration to ethnic enclaves.

Many adult immigrants hold dear their homeland cultures and adapt as little as possible to mainstream U.S. cultural norms, which commonly leads to marginalization. *Marginalization* is the tendency for adult immigrants to be rendered powerless in comparison to native-born adults because they live as half citizens not fully capable of realizing the individual opportunities often found available to average native-born adults. Their U.S. born children find themselves living in a culturally transitioning family structure. Their parents are more like permanent tourists here while they become fully Americanized (for better or for worse), because public schools are tremendous socialization agencies which effectively acculturate most children into the mainstream. These children often serve as cultural liaisons to their parents and the mainstream culture. Regardless of which culture.[vii]

During this acculturation process we are often times face dilemmas.

1.5.3 Ethical Dilemmas[viii]

An issue many people face when interacting and communicating with another culture is whether they should change their behaviors to fit the host culture's belief, values, norms and social practices. The question arises on whether the people of the host culture should adjunct their behaviors or is it the responsibility of the visitor?

"When in Rome, do as the Romans do." This old saying places the responsibility on the visitor. Respecting differences in verbal and nonverbal communication means the visitor must take the responsibility to research about the host culture and follow the host culture. Do you think people should engage in behaviors they find morally or ethically wrong? Is it possible people could lose their own sense of self? Could making these adaptation possibly offend the host culture?

1. Another ethical issue confronting the visitor is whether it is acceptable to judge the host culture's behaviors due to a vast difference in beliefs, values, norms and social practices. Are there values that go beyond cultural differences?

1.5.3.1 Components of Intercultural Communication Competence

Competent communication is interaction that is perceived as effective in fulfilling certain rewarding objectives in a way that is also appropriate to the context in which the interaction occurs.

Intercultural competence is **contextual.** An impression or judgment that a person is intercultural competent is made with respect to both a specific relational context and a particular situational context. Competence is not independent of the relationships and situations within which communication occurs.

· **Knowledge** refers to the cognitive information you need to have about the people, the context, and the norms of appropriateness that operate in a specific culture.

· **Motivations** include the overall set of emotional associations that people have as they anticipate and actually communicate interculturally.

· **Feelings** refer to the emotional or effective state that you experience when communicating with someone from a different culture.

· **Intentions** are what guide your choices in a particular intercultural interaction. Your intentions are the goals, plans, objectives, and desires that focus and direct your behavior.

· **Actions** refer to the actual performance of those behaviors that are regarded as appropriate and effective.

· **Respect** is shown through both verbal and nonverbal symbols.

1.5.3.1.1 BASIC dimensions of intercultural competence.

· **Orientation to Knowledge** - The terms people use to explain themselves and the world around them.

· **Empathy** - The capacity to behave as though you understand the world as others do.

· **Interaction Management** - Skill in regulating conversations.

· **Task Role Behavior** - Behaviors that involve the initiation of ideas related to group problem-solving activities.

· **Relational Role Behavior** - Behaviors associated with interpersonal harmony and mediation.

· **Tolerance for Ambiguity Interaction Posture** - The ability to react to new and ambiguous situations with little visible discomfort.

· **Display of Respect** - The ability to show respect and positive regard for another person.

· **Interaction Posture** - The ability to respond to others in descriptive.

Intercultural communication competence (ICC) is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in various cultural contexts. There are numerous components of ICC. Some key components include motivation, self- and other knowledge, and tolerance for uncertainty.

Initially, a person's motivation for communicating with people from other cultures must be considered. *Motivation* refers to the root of a person's desire to foster intercultural relationships and can be intrinsic or extrinsic (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Put simply, if a person isn't motivated to communicate with people from different cultures, then the components of ICC discussed next don't really matter. If a person has a healthy curiosity that drives him or her toward intercultural encounters in order to learn more about self and others, then there is a foundation from which to build additional competence-relevant attitudes and skills. This intrinsic motivation makes intercultural communication a voluntary, rewarding, and lifelong learning process. Motivation can also be extrinsic, meaning that the desire for intercultural communication is driven by an outside reward like money, power, or recognition. While both types of motivation can contribute to ICC, context may further enhance or impede a person's motivation to communicate across cultures.

Members of dominant groups are often less motivated, intrinsically and extrinsically, toward intercultural communication than members of nondominant groups, because they don't see the incentives for doing so. Having more power in communication encounters can create an unbalanced situation where the individual from the nondominant group is expected to exhibit competence, or the ability to adapt to the communication behaviors and attitudes of the other. Even in situations where extrinsic rewards like securing an overseas business investment are at stake, it is likely that the foreign investor is much more accustomed to adapting to United States business customs and communication than vice versa. This expectation that others will adapt to our communication can be unconscious, but later ICC skills we will learn will help bring it to awareness.

The unbalanced situation just described is a daily reality for many individuals with nondominant identities. Their motivation toward intercultural communication may be driven by survival in terms of functioning effectively in dominant contexts. This is a form of code-switching in which individuals from nondominant groups adapt their communication to fit in with the dominant group. In such instances, African Americans may "talk white" by conforming to what is called "standard English," women in corporate environments may adapt masculine communication patterns, people who are gay or lesbian may self-censor and avoid discussing their same-gender

partners with coworkers, and people with nonvisible disabilities may not disclose them in order to avoid judgment.

While intrinsic motivation captures an idealistic view of intercultural communication as rewarding in its own right, many contexts create extrinsic motivation. In either case, there is a risk that an individual's motivation can still lead to incompetent communication. For example, it would be exploitative for an extrinsically motivated person to pursue intercultural communication solely for an external reward and then abandon the intercultural relationship once the reward is attained. These situations highlight the relational aspect of ICC, meaning that the motivation of all parties should be considered. Motivation alone cannot create ICC.

Knowledge supplements motivation and is an important part of building ICC. Knowledge includes self- and other-awareness, mindfulness, and cognitive flexibility. Building knowledge of our own cultures, identities, and communication patterns takes more than passive experience (Martin & Nakayama). Developing cultural self-awareness often requires us to get out of our comfort zones. Listening to people who are different from us is a key component of developing self-knowledge. This may be uncomfortable, because we may realize that people think of our identities differently than we thought.. They perceived US Americans to be shallow because they were friendly and exciting while they were in Sweden but didn't remain friends once they left. The most effective way to develop other-knowledge is by direct and thoughtful encounters with other cultures. However, people may not readily have these opportunities for a variety of reasons. Despite the overall diversity in the United States, many people still only interact with people who are similar to them. Even in a racially diverse educational setting, for example, people often group off with people of their own race. While a heterosexual person may have a gay or lesbian friend or relative, they likely spend most of their time with other heterosexuals. Unless you interact with people with disabilities as part of your job or have a person with a disability in your friend or family group, you likely spend most of your time interacting with able-bodied people. Living in a rural area may limit your ability to interact with a range of cultures, and most people do not travel internationally regularly. Because of this, we may have to make a determined effort to interact with other cultures or rely on educational sources like college classes, books, or documentaries. Learning another language is also a good way to learn about a culture, because you can then read the news or watch movies in the native language, which can offer insights that are lost in translation. It is important to note though that we must evaluate the credibility of the source of our knowledge, whether it is a book, person, or other source. Also, knowledge of another language does not automatically equate to ICC.

Developing self- and other-knowledge is an ongoing process that will continue to adapt and grow as we encounter new experiences. Mindfulness and cognitive complexity will help as we continue to build our ICC (Pusch, 2009). Mindfulness is a state of self- and other-monitoring that informs later reflection on communication interactions. As mindful communicators we should ask questions that focus on the interactive process like "How is our communication going? What are my reactions? What are their reactions?" Being able to adapt our communication in the moment based on our answers to these questions is a skill that comes with a high level of ICC. Reflecting on the communication encounter later to see what can be learned is also a way to build ICC. We should then be able to incorporate what we learned into our communication frameworks, which requires cognitive flexibility. Cognitive flexibilityrefers to the ability to continually supplement and revise existing knowledge to create new categories rather than forcing new knowledge into old categories. Cognitive flexibility helps prevent our knowledge from becoming stale and also prevents the formation of stereotypes and can help us avoid prejudging an encounter or jumping to conclusions. In summary, to be better intercultural communicators, we should know much about others and ourselves and be able to reflect on and adapt our knowledge as we gain new experiences.

Motivation and knowledge can inform us as we gain new experiences, but how we feel in the moment of intercultural encounters is also important. Tolerance for uncertainty refers to an individual's attitude about and level of comfort in uncertain situations (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Some people perform better in uncertain situations than others, and intercultural encounters often bring up uncertainty. Whether communicating with someone of a different gender, race, or nationality, we are often wondering what we should or shouldn't do or say. Situations of uncertainty most often become clearer as they progress, but the anxiety that an individual with a low tolerance for uncertainty feels may lead them to leave the situation or otherwise communicate in a less competent manner. Individuals with a high tolerance for uncertainty may exhibit more patience, waiting on new information to become available or seeking out information, which may then increase the understanding of the situation and lead to a more successful outcome (Pusch, 2009). Individuals who are intrinsically motivated toward intercultural communication may have a higher tolerance for uncertainty, in that their curiosity leads them to engage with others who are different because they find the self- and other-knowledge gained rewarding.

1.5.3.2 Cultivating Intercultural Communication Competence

How can ICC be built and achieved? This is a key question we will address in this section. Two main ways to build ICC are through experiential learning and reflective practices (Bednarz, 2010). We must first realize that competence isn't any one thing. Part of being competent means that you can assess new situations and adapt your existing knowledge to the new contexts. What it means to be competent will vary depending on your physical location, your role (personal, professional, etc.), and your life stage, among other things. Sometimes we will know or be able to figure out what is expected of us in a given situation, but sometimes we may need to act in unexpected ways to meet the needs of a situation. Competence enables us to better cope with the unexpected, adapt to the nonroutine, and connect to uncommon frameworks. I have always told my students that ICC is less about a list of rules and more about a box of tools.

Three ways to cultivate ICC are to foster attitudes that motivate us, discover knowledge that informs us, and develop skills that enable us (Bennett, 2009). To foster attitudes that motivate us, we must develop a sense of wonder about culture. This sense of wonder can lead to feeling overwhelmed, humbled, or awed (Opdal, 2001). This sense of wonder may correlate to a high tolerance for uncertainty, which can help us turn potentially frustrating experiences we have into teachable moments.

Discovering knowledge that informs us is another step that can build on our motivation. One tool involves learning more about our cognitive style, or how we learn. Our cognitive style consists of our preferred patterns for "gathering information, constructing meaning, and organizing and applying knowledge" (Bennett, 2009). As we explore cognitive styles, we discover that there are differences in how people attend to and perceive the world, explain events, organize the world, and use rules of logic (Nisbett, 2003). Some cultures have a cognitive style that focuses more on tasks, analytic and objective thinking, details and precision, inner direction, and independence, while others focus on relationships and people over tasks and things, concrete and metaphorical thinking, and a group consciousness and harmony.

Developing ICC is a complex learning process. At the basic level of learning, we accumulate knowledge and assimilate it into our existing frameworks. But accumulated knowledge doesn't necessarily help us in situations where we have to apply that knowledge. Transformative learning takes place at the highest levels and occurs when we encounter situations that challenge our accumulated knowledge and our ability to accommodate that knowledge to manage a real-world situation. The cognitive dissonance that results in these situations is often uncomfortable and can lead to a hesitance to repeat such an engagement. One tip for cultivating ICC that can help manage these challenges is to find a community of like-minded people who are also motivated to develop ICC. In my graduate program, I lived in the international dormitory in order to experience the cultural diversity that I had enjoyed so much studying abroad a few years earlier. I was surrounded by international students and US American students who were more or less interested in cultural diversity. This ended up being a tremendous learning experience, and I worked on research about identity and communication between international and American students.

Developing skills that enable us is another part of ICC. Some of the skills important to ICC are the ability to empathize, accumulate cultural information, listen, resolve conflict, and manage anxiety (Bennett, 2009). Again, you are already developing a foundation for these skills by reading this book, but you can expand those skills to intercultural settings with the motivation and knowledge already described. Contact alone does not increase intercultural skills; there must be more deliberate measures taken to fully capitalize on those encounters. While research now shows that intercultural contact does decrease prejudices, this is not enough to become interculturally competent. The ability to empathize and manage anxiety enhances prejudice reduction, and these two skills have been shown to enhance the overall impact of intercultural contact even more than acquiring cultural knowledge. There is intercultural training available for people who are interested. If you can't access training, you may choose to research intercultural training on your own, as there are many books, articles, and manuals written on the subject.

Reflective practices can also help us process through rewards and challenges associated with developing ICC. As we open ourselves to new experiences, we are likely to have both positive and negative reactions. It can be very useful to take note of negative or defensive reactions you have. This can help you identify certain triggers that may create barriers to effective intercultural interaction. Noting positive experiences can also help you identify triggers for learning that you could seek out or recreate to enhance the positive (Bednarz, 2010). A more complex method of reflection is called intersectional reflexivity. Intersectional reflexivity is a reflective practice by which we acknowledge intersecting identities, both privileged and disadvantaged, and implicate ourselves in social hierarchies and inequalities (Jones Jr., 2010). This method brings in the concepts of dominant and nondominant groups and the privileges/disadvantages dialectic we discussed earlier.

While formal intercultural experiences like studying abroad or volunteering for the Special Olympics or a shelter for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer (GLBTQ) youth can result in learning, informal experiences are also important. We may be less likely to include informal experiences in our reflection if we don't see them as legitimate. Reflection should also include "critical incidents" or what I call "a-ha! moments." Think of reflection as a tool for metacompetence that can be useful in bringing the formal and informal together (Bednarz, 2010).

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***Think About It . . .* "Getting Competent" - Thinking under the Influence**

Communication and culture scholar Brenda Allen coined the phrase "thinking under the influence" (TUI) to highlight a reflective process that can help us hone our intercultural communication competence (Allen, 2011). As we discussed earlier, being mindful is an important part of building competence. Once we can become aware of our thought processes and behaviors, we can more effectively monitor and intervene in them. She asks us to monitor our thoughts and feelings about other people, both similar to and different from us. As we monitor, we should try to identify instances when we are guilty of TUI, such as uncritically accepting the dominant belief systems, relying on stereotypes, or prejudging someone based on their identities. She recounts seeing a picture on the front of the newspaper with three men who appeared Latino. She found herself wondering what they had done, and then found out from the caption that they were the relatives of people who died in a car crash. She identified that as a TUI moment and asked herself if she would have had the same thought if they had been black, white, Asian, or female. When we feel "surprised" by someone different, this often points to a preexisting negative assumption that we can unpack and learn from. Allen also found herself surprised when a panelist at a conference who used a wheelchair and was hearing impaired made witty comments. Upon reflection, she realized that she had an assumption that people with disabilities would have a gloomy outlook on life. While these examples focus on out-groups, she also notes that it's important for people, especially in nondominant groups, to monitor their thoughts about their own group, as they may have internalized negative attitudes about their group from the dominant culture. As a black woman, she notes that she has been critical of black people who "do not speak mainstream English" based on stereotypes she internalized about race, language, and intelligence. It is not automatically a bad thing to TUI. Even Brenda Allen, an accomplished and admirable scholar of culture and communication, catches herself doing it. When we notice that we TUI, it's important to reflect on that moment and try to adjust our thinking processes.

This is an ongoing process, but it is an easy-to-remember way to cultivate your ICC. Keep a record of instances where you catch yourself "thinking under the influence" and answer the following questions:

1. What triggers you to TUI?

2. Where did these influences on your thought come from?

3. What concepts from this chapter can you apply to change your thought processes?

1.5.3.3 Key Takeaways

· Getting integrated: Intercultural communication competence (ICC) is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in various cultural contexts. ICC also has the potential to benefit you in academic, professional, personal, and civic contexts.

· A person with appropriate intrinsic or extrinsic motivation to engage in intercultural communication can develop self- and other-knowledge that will contribute to their ability to be mindful of their own communication and tolerate uncertain situations.

· We can cultivate ICC by fostering attitudes that motivate us, discovering knowledge that informs us, and developing skills that enable us.

1.5.4 Exercises

1. Identify an intercultural encounter in which you did not communicate as competently as you would have liked. What concept(s) from the chapter would have helped you in this situation and how?

2. Which of the following components of ICC—motivation, mindfulness, cognitive flexibility, and tolerance for uncertainty—do you think you are most competent at, and which one needs the most work? Identify how you became so competent at the first one and some ways that you can improve the second one.

3. Choose one of the three ways discussed to cultivate ICC and make a list of five steps you can take to enhance this part of your competence.

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[i] Stokes

[ii] http://culturalcommunicaiton.blogspot.com/2012/03/communication-and-intercultural.html

[iii] Stokes-Rice, 2019

[iv] http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.461.5459&rep=rep1&type=pdf

[v] Stokes-Rice, 2019

[vi] www.quora.com/How-is-cultural-integration-defined

[vii] COC Sociology 101 OER

[viii] Stokes-Rice, 2019

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Cultural Diversity and Context

2.1: Cultural Characteristics and the Roots of Culture
2.2: Taxonomies of Cultural Patterns
2.3: Understanding Cultural Identity
2.4: Self and Identity
2.5: Social Construction of Cultural Identity

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2.1: Cultural Characteristics and the Roots of Culture

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, readers should:

- Explain what culture is and define it in several ways.
- Discuss the effect that culture has on communication.
- Describe the role of power in culture and communication.
- Discuss Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's Value Orientation Theory.
- Discuss Hofestede's Dimensions of National Culture Theory.
- Discuss Edward T. Hall's Theories.

What does the term "culture" mean to you? Is it the apex of knowledge and intellectual achievement? A particular nation, people or social group? Rituals, symbols and myths? The arbiter of what is right and wrong behavior?

It has become quite common to describe natural groupings that humans create as a "culture." Popular media has given us women's culture, men's culture, workplace cultures, specially-abled culture, pet culture, school culture, exercise culture, and the list goes on. But, are all these divisions really classified as culture? For the purposes of this textbook, the answer is no. Cultural communication researcher, Donal Carbaugh (1988) defines culture as "a system of symbols, premises, rules, forms, and the domains and dimensions of mutual meanings associated with these."

Carbaugh was expanding on the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who believed that culture was a system based on symbols. Geertz said that people use symbols to define their world and express their emotions. As human beings, we all learn about the world around us, both consciously and unconsciously, starting at a very young age. What we internalize comes through observation, experience, interaction, and what we are taught. We manipulate symbols to create meaning and stories that dictate our behaviors, to organize our lives, and to interact with others. The meanings we attach to symbols are arbitrary. Looking someone in the eye means that you are direct and respectful in some countries, yet, in other cultural systems, looking away is a sign of respect.

Carbaugh also suggested that culture is "a learned set of shared interpretations and beliefs, values, and norms, which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people." Our course will combine Carbaugh's longer definitions into the statement that culture is a learned pattern of values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a large group of people. It is within this framework that we will explore what happens when people from different cultural backgrounds interact.

2.1.0.1 Culture is Learned

Although there is a debate as to whether babies are born into the world as *tabula rasa* (blank slate) or without knowing anything. We can say that they do not come with pre-programmed preferences like your personal computer or cell phone. And, although human beings do share some universal habits such as eating and sleeping, these habits are biologically and physiologically based, not culturally based. Culture is the unique way that we have learned to eat and sleep. Other members of our culture have taught us slowly and consciously (or even subconsciously) what it means to eat and sleep.

2.1.0.1 Values and Culture

Value systems are fundamental to understanding how culture expresses itself. Values are deeply felt and often serve as principles that guide people in their perceptions and behaviors. Using our values, certain ideas are judged to be right or wrong, good or bad, important or not important, desirable or not desirable. Common values include fairness, respect, integrity, compassion, happiness, kindness, creativity, curiosity, religion, wisdom, and more.

Ideally, our values should match up with what we say we will do, but sometimes our various values come into conflict, and a choice has to be made as to which one will be given preference over another. An example of this could be love of country and love of family. You might love both, but ultimate choose family over country when a crisis occurs.

2.1.0.1 Beliefs and Culture

Our values are supported by our assumptions of our world. Assumptions are ideas that we believe and hold to be true. Beliefs come about through repetition. This repetition becomes a habit we form and leads to habitual patterns of thinking and doing. We do not

realize our assumptions because they are in-grained in us at an unconscious level. We become aware of our assumptions when we encounter a value or belief that is different from our own, and it makes us feel that we need to stand up for, or validate, our beliefs.

People from the United States strongly believe in independence. They consider themselves as separate individuals in control of their own lives. The Declaration of Independence states that all people—not groups, but individual people—are created equal. This sense of equality leads to the idea that all people are of the same standing or importance, and therefore, informality or lack of rigid social protocol is common. This leads to an informality of speech, dress, and manners that other cultures might find difficult to negotiate because of their own beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors.

Beliefs are part of every human life in all world cultures. They define for us, and give meaning to, objects, people, places, and things in our lives. Our assumptions about our world determine how we react emotionally and what actions we need to take. These assumptions about our *worldviews* guide our behaviors and shape our attitudes. Mary Clark (2005) defines **worldviews** as "beliefs and assumptions by which an individual makes sense of experiences that are hidden deep within the language and traditions of the surrounding society." *Worldviews* are the shared values and beliefs that form the customs, behaviors and foundations of any particular society. *Worldviews* "set the ground rules for shared cultural meaning" (Clark, 2005). *Worldviews* are the patterns developed through interactions within families, neighborhoods, schools, communities, churches, and so on. *Worldviews* can be resources for understanding and analyzing the fundamental differences between cultures.

2.1.0.1 Feelings and Culture

Our culture can give us a sense of familiarity and comfort in a variety of contexts. We embody a sense of ethnocentrism. **Ethnocentrism** is the belief that one's own culture is superior to all other's and is the standard by which all other cultures should be measured (Sumner, 1906). An example of this could be the farm-to-table movement that is currently popular in the United States. Different parts of the country, pride themselves in growing produce for local consumption touting the benefits of better food, enhanced economy, and carbon neutrality. Tasting menus are developed, awards are given, and consumers brag about the amazing, innovative benefits of living in the United States. What is often missed is the fact that for many people, in many cultures across the planet, the farm-to-table process has not changed for thousands of years. Being a locavore is the only way they know.

Geertz (1973) believed the meanings we attach to our cultural symbols can create chaos when we meet someone who believes in a different meaning or interpretation; it can give us culture shock. This shock can be disorientating, confusing, or surprising. It can bring on anxiety or nervousness, and, for some, a sense of losing control. Culture is always provoking a variety of feelings. **Culture shock** will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

2.1.0.1 Behavior and Culture

Our worldview influences our behaviors. Behaviors endure over time and are passed from person to person. Within a dominant or national culture, members can belong to many different groups. Dominant cultures may be made up of many subsets or co-cultures that exist within them. For example, your dominant or national culture may be the United States, but you are also a thirty-year-old woman from the Midwest who loves poodles. Because you are a thirty-year-old woman, you exist in the world very differently than a fifty-year-old man. A co-culture is a group whose values, beliefs or behaviors set it apart from the larger culture of which it is a part of and shares many similarities. (Orbe, 1996) Social psychologists may prefer the term micro-culture as opposed to co-culture.

2.1.0.1 Culture is Dynamic and Heterogeneous

In addition to exploring the components of the definition, it should be understood that culture is always changing. Cultural patterns are not rigid but slowly and constantly changing. The United States of the 1960s is not the United States of today. Nor if I know one person from the United States do I know them all. Within cultures there are struggles to negotiate relationships within a multitude of forces of change. Although the general nature of this book focuses on broad principles, by viewing any culture as diverse in character or content (**heterogeneous**), we are better equipped to understand the complexities of that culture and become more sensitive to how people in that culture live.

2.1.0.1 Describing Culture

Anyone who has had an intercultural encounter or participated in intercultural communication can tell you that they encountered differences between themselves and others. Acknowledging the differences isn't difficult. Rather, the difficulties come from describing the differences using terms that accurately convey the subtle meanings within cultures.

The study of cross-cultural analysis incorporates the fields of anthropology, sociology, psychology, and communication. Within cross-cultural analysis, several names dominate our understanding of culture—Florence Kluckhohn, Fred Strodtbeck, Geert Hofstede and Edward T. Hall. Although new ideas are continually being proposed, Hofstede remains the leading thinker on how we see cultures.

This section will review both the thinkers and the main components of how they define culture. These theories provide a comprehensive and enduring understanding of the key factors that shape a culture. By understanding the key concepts and theories, you should be able to formulate your own analysis of the different cultures.

2.1.0.1 Value Orientation Theory

The Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck Value Orientations theory represents one of the earliest efforts to develop a cross-cultural theory of values. According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), every culture faces the same basic survival needs and must answer the same universal questions. It is out of this need that cultural values arise. The basic questions faced by people everywhere fall into five categories and reflect concerns about: 1) human nature, 2) the relationship between human beings and the natural world, 3) time, 4) human activity, and 5) social relations. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck hypothesized three possible responses or orientations to each of the concerns.

2.1.0.1 SUMMARY OF KLUCKHOHN-STRODTBECK VALUES ORIENTATION THEORY

2.1.1 Basic Concerns	2.1.2 Orientations		
2.1.3 Human nature	2.1.4 Evil	2.1.5 Mixed	2.1.6 Good
2.1.7 Relationship to natural world	2.1.8 Mastery	2.1.9 Harmony	2.1.10 Submission
2.1.11 Time	2.1.12 Past	2.1.13 Present	2.1.14 Future
2.1.15 Activity	2.1.16 Being	2.1.17 Becoming	2.1.18 Doing
2.1.19 Social relations	2.1.20 Collective	2.1.21 Collateral	2.1.22 Individual

2.1.22.1 What is the inherent nature of human beings?

According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, this is a question that all societies ask, and there are generally three different responses. The people in some societies are inclined to believe that people are inherently evil and that the society must exercise strong measures to keep the evil impulses of people in check. On the other hand, other societies are more likely to see human beings as basically good and possessing an inherent tendency towards goodness. Between these two poles are societies that see human beings as possessing the potential to be either good or evil depending upon the influences that surround them. Societies also differ on whether human nature is immutable (*unchangeable*) or mutable (*changeable*).

2.1.22.1 What is the relationship between human beings and the natural world?

Some societies believe nature is a powerful force in the face of which human beings are essentially helpless. We could describe this as “nature over humans.” Other societies are more likely to believe that through intelligence and the application of knowledge, humans can control nature. In other words, they embrace a “humans over nature” position. Between these two extremes are the societies who believe humans are wise to strive to live in “harmony with nature.”

2.1.22.1 What is the best way to think about time?

Some societies are rooted in the past, believing that people should learn from history and strive to preserve the traditions of the past. Other societies place more value on the here and now, believing people should live fully in the present. Then there are societies that place the greatest value on the future, believing people should always delay immediate satisfactions while they plan and work hard to make a better future.

2.1.22.1 What is the proper mode of human activity?

In some societies, "being" is the most valued orientation. Striving for great things is not necessary or important. In other societies, "becoming" is what is most valued. Life is regarded as a process of continual unfolding. Our purpose on earth, the people might say, is to become fully human. Finally, there are societies that are primarily oriented to "doing." In such societies, people are likely to think of the inactive life as a wasted life. People are more likely to express the view that we are here to work hard and that human worth is measured by the sum of accomplishments.

2.1.22.1 What is the ideal relationship between the individual and society?

Expressed another way, we can say the concern is about how a society is best organized. People in some societies think it most natural that a society be organized [by groups or collectives]. They hold to the view that some people should lead and others should follow. Leaders, they feel, should make all the important decisions [for the group]. Other societies are best described as valuing collateral relationships. In such societies, everyone has an important role to play in society; therefore, important decisions should be made by consensus. In still other societies, the individual is the primary unit of society. In societies that place great value on individualism, people are likely to believe that each person should have control over his/her own destiny. When groups convene to make decisions, they should follow the principle of "one person, one vote."

As Hill (2002) has observed, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck did not consider the theory to be complete. In fact, they originally proposed a sixth value orientation—Space: here, there, or far away, which they could not quite figure out how to investigate at the time. Today, the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck framework is just one among many attempts to study universal human values.

2.1.22.1 Hofstede's Dimensions of National Culture Theory

Geert Hofstede, sometimes called the father of modern cross-cultural science and thinking, is a social psychologist who focused on a comparison of nations using a statistical analysis of two unique databases. The first and largest database composed of answers that matched employee samples from forty different countries to the same survey questions focused on attitudes and beliefs. The second consisted of answers to some of the same questions by Hofstede's executive students who came from fifteen countries and from a variety of companies and industries. He developed a framework for understanding the systematic differences between nations in these two databases. This framework focused on value dimensions. Values, in this case, are *broad preferences for one state of affairs over others*, and they are mostly unconscious.

Most of us understand that values are our own culture's or society's ideas about what is good, bad, acceptable, or unacceptable. Hofstede developed a framework for understanding how these values underlie organizational behavior. Through his database research, he identified five key value dimensions (power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, & time) that analyze and interpret the behaviors, values, and attitudes of a national culture (Hofstede, 1980).

2.1.22.1 Power Distance

Power distance refers to how openly a society or culture accepts or does not accept differences between people, as in hierarchies in the workplace, in politics, and so on. For example, *high power distance* cultures openly accept that a boss is "higher" and as such deserves a more formal respect and authority. Examples of these cultures include Japan, Mexico, and the Philippines. In Japan or Mexico, the senior person is almost a father figure and is automatically given respect and usually loyalty without questions.

In Southern Europe, Latin America, and much of Asia, power is an integral part of the social equation. People tend to accept relationships of servitude. An individual's status, age, and seniority command respect—they're what make it all right for the lower-ranked person to take orders. Subordinates expect to be told what to do and won't take initiative or speak their minds unless a manager explicitly asks for their opinion.

At the other end of the spectrum are **low power distance** cultures, in which superiors and subordinates are more likely to see each other as equal in power. Countries found at this end of the spectrum include Austria and Denmark. To be sure, not all cultures view

power in the same ways. In Sweden, Norway, and Israel, for example, respect for equality is a warranty of freedom. Subordinates and managers alike often have carte blanche to speak their minds.

Interestingly enough, research indicates that the United States tilts toward low power distance but is more in the middle of the scale than Germany and the United Kingdom. The United States has a culture of promoting participation at the office while maintaining control in the hands of the manager. People in this type of culture tend to be relatively laid-back about status and social standing—but there's a firm understanding of who has the power. What's surprising for many people is that countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia actually rank lower on the power distance spectrum than the United States.

In a high power distance culture, you would probably be much less likely to challenge a decision, to provide an alternative, or to give input. If you are working with someone from a high power distance culture, you may need to take extra care to elicit feedback and involve them in the discussion because their cultural framework may preclude their participation. They may have learned that less powerful people must accept decisions without comment, even if they have a concern or know there is a significant problem.

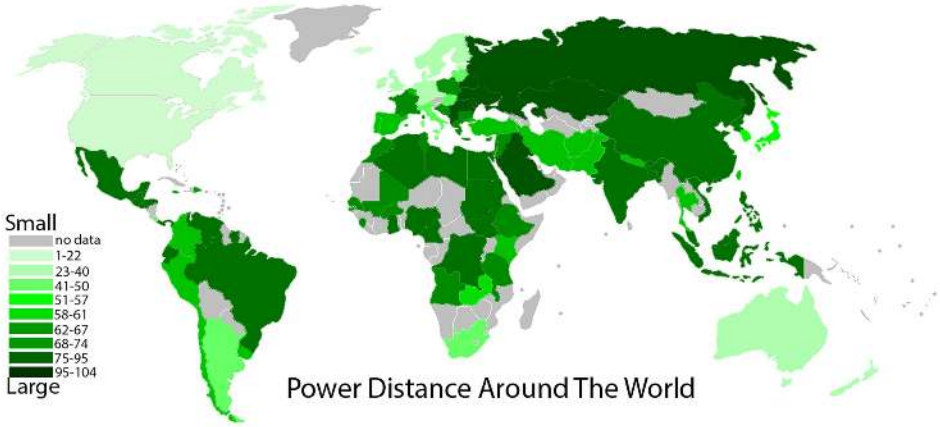

Figure **2.1.1**: A map which shows the relative power distance of nations around the world

2.1.22.1 Individualism vs. collectivism

Individualism vs. **collectivism** anchor opposite ends of a continuum that describes how people define themselves and their relationships with others. Individualism is just what it sounds like. It refers to people's tendency to take care of themselves and their immediate circle of family and friends, perhaps at the expense of the overall society. In individualistic cultures, what counts most is self-realization. Initiating alone, sweating alone, achieving alone— not necessarily collective efforts—are what win applause. In individualistic cultures, competition is the fuel of success.

The United States and Northern European societies are often labeled as individualistic. In the United States, individualism is valued and promoted—from its political structure (individual rights and democracy) to entrepreneurial zeal (capitalism). Other examples of high-individualism cultures include Australia and the United Kingdom.

Communication is more direct in individualistic societies but more indirect in collectivistic societies. The U.S. ranks very high in individualism, and South Korea ranks quite low. Japan falls close to the middle.

When we talk about masculine or feminine cultures, we're not talking about diversity issues. It's about how a society views traits that are considered masculine or feminine. Each carries with it a set of cultural expectations and norms for gender behavior and gender roles across life.

Traditionally perceived "masculine" values are assertiveness, materialism, and less concern for others. In masculine-oriented cultures, gender roles are usually crisply defined. Men tend to be more focused on performance, ambition, and material success. They cut tough and independent personas, while women cultivate modesty and quality of life. Cultures in Japan and Latin American are examples of masculine-oriented cultures.

In contrast, feminine cultures are thought to emphasize "feminine" values: concern for all, an emphasis on the quality of life, and an emphasis on relationships. In feminine-oriented cultures, both genders swap roles, with the focus on quality of life, service, and independence. The Scandinavian cultures rank as feminine cultures, as do cultures in Switzerland and New Zealand. The United States is actually more moderate, and its score is ranked in the middle between masculine and feminine classifications. For all these

factors, it's important to remember that cultures don't necessarily fall neatly into one camp or the other. The range of difference is one aspect of intercultural communication that requires significant attention when a communicator enters a new environment.

2.1.22.1 Uncertainty avoidance

When we meet each other for the first time, we often use what we have previously learned to understand our current context. We also do this to reduce our uncertainty. People who have high uncertainty avoidance generally prefer to steer clear of conflict and competition. They tend to appreciate very clear instructions. They dislike ambiguity. At the office, sharply defined rules and rituals are used to get tasks completed. Stability and what is known are preferred to instability and the unknown.

Some cultures, such as the U.S. and Britain, are highly tolerant of uncertainty, while others go to great lengths to reduce the element of surprise. Cultures in the Arab world, for example, are high in uncertainty avoidance; they tend to be resistant to change and reluctant to take risks. Whereas a U.S. business negotiator might enthusiastically agree to try a new procedure, the Egyptian counterpart would likely refuse to get involved until all the details are worked out.

Berger and Calabrese (1975) developed uncertainty reduction theory to examine this dynamic aspect of communication. Here are seven axioms of uncertainty:

1. There is a high level of uncertainty at first. As we get to know one another, our verbal communication increases and our uncertainty begins to decrease.
2. Following verbal communication, as nonverbal communication increases, uncertainty will continue to decrease, and we will express more nonverbal displays of affiliation, like nodding one's head to express agreement.
3. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, we tend to increase our information-seeking behavior, perhaps asking questions to gain more insight. As our understanding increases, uncertainty decreases, as does the information-seeking behavior.
4. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, the communication interaction is not as personal or intimate. As uncertainty is reduced, intimacy increases.
5. When experiencing high levels of uncertainty, communication will feature more reciprocity, or displays of respect. As uncertainty decreases, reciprocity may diminish.
6. Differences between people increase uncertainty, while similarities decrease it.
7. Higher levels of uncertainty are associated with a decrease in the indication of liking the other person, while reductions in uncertainty are associated with liking the other person more.

In educational settings, people from countries high in uncertainty avoidance expect their teachers to be experts with all of the answers. People from countries low in uncertainty avoidance don't mind it when a teacher says, "I don't know."

2.1.22.1 Long-term vs. short-term orientation

The fifth dimension is long-term orientation, which refers to whether a culture has a long-term or short-term orientation. This dimension was added by Hofstede after the original four you just read about. It resulted in the effort to understand the difference in thinking between the East and the West. Certain values are associated with each orientation. The long-term orientation values persistence, perseverance, thriftiness, and having a sense of shame. These are evident in traditional Eastern cultures. Long-term orientation is often marked by persistence, thrift and frugality, and an order to relationships based on age and status. A sense of shame, both personal and for the family and community, is also observed across generations. What an individual does reflects on the family, and is carried by immediate and extended family members.

The short-term orientation values tradition only to the extent of fulfilling social obligations or providing gifts or favors. While there may be a respect for tradition, there is also an emphasis on personal representation and honor, a reflection of identity and integrity. Personal stability and consistency are also valued in a short-term oriented culture, contributing to an overall sense of predictability and familiarity. These cultures are more likely to be focused on the immediate or short-term impact of an issue. Not surprisingly, the United Kingdom and the United States rank low on the long-term orientation.

2.1.22.1 CRITIQUE OF HOFSTEDE'S THEORY

Among the various attempts by social scientists to study human values from a cultural perspective, Hofstede's is certainly popular. In fact, it would be a rare culture text that did not pay special attention to Hofstede's theory. Value dimensions are all evolving as many people gain experience outside their home cultures and countries, therefore, in practice, these five dimensions do not occur as

single values but are really woven together and interdependent, creating very complex cultural interactions. Even though these five values are constantly shifting and not static, they help us begin to understand how and why people from different cultures may think and act as they do.

However, Hofstede's cultural dimensions are not without critics. It has been faulted for promoting a largely static view of culture (Hamden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1997) and as Orr & Hauser (2008) have suggested, the world has changed in dramatic ways since Hofstede's research began.

2.1.22.1 Edward T. Hall

Edward T. Hall was a respected anthropologist who applied his field to the understanding of cultures and intercultural communications. Hall is best noted for three principal categories that analyze and interpret how communications and interactions between cultures differ: context, space, and time.

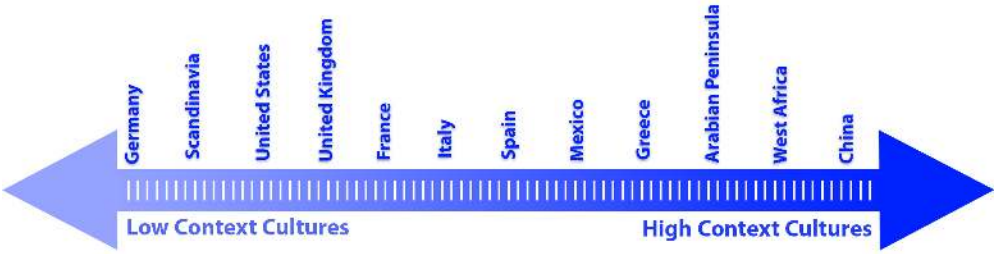

Figure **2.1.2**: A graph which shows the level of context in various world cultures

High and low context refers to how a message is communicated. In high-context cultures, such as those found in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, the physical context of the message carries a great deal of importance. People tend to be more indirect and to expect the person they are communicating with to decode the implicit part of their message. While the person sending the message takes painstaking care in crafting the message, the person receiving the message is expected to read it within context. The message may lack the verbal directness you would expect in a low-context culture. In high-context cultures, body language is as important and sometimes more important than the actual words spoken.

In contrast, in low-context cultures such as the United States and most Northern European countries, people tend to be explicit and direct in their communication. Satisfying individual needs is important. You're probably familiar with some well-known low-context mottos: "Say what you mean" and "Don't beat around the bush." The guiding principle is to minimize the margins of misunderstanding or doubt. Low-context communication aspires to get straight to the point.

Communication between people from high-context and low-context cultures can be confusing. In business interactions, people from low-context cultures tend to listen primarily to the words spoken; they tend not to be as cognizant of nonverbal aspects. As a result, people often miss important clues that could tell them more about the specific issue.

2.1.22.1 Space

Space refers to the study of physical space and people. Hall called this the study of proxemics, which focuses on space and distance between people as they interact. *Space* refers to everything from how close people stand to one another to how people might mark their territory or boundaries in the workplace and in other settings. Stand too close to someone from the United States, which prefers a "safe" physical distance, and you are apt to make them uncomfortable. How close is too close depends on where you are from. Whether consciously or unconsciously, we all establish a comfort zone when interacting with others. Standing distances shrink and expand across cultures. Latins, Spaniards, and Filipinos (whose culture has been influenced by three centuries of Spanish colonization) stand rather close even in business encounters. In cultures that have a low need for territory, people not only tend to stand closer together but also are more willing to share their space—whether it be a workplace, an office, a seat on a train, or even ownership of a business project.

2.1.22.1 Attitudes toward Time: Polychronic versus Monochronic Cultures

Hall identified that time is another important concept greatly influenced by culture. In polychronic cultures—*polychronic* literally means "many times"—people can do several things at the same time. In monochronic cultures, or "one-time" cultures, people tend

to do one task at a time.

This isn't to suggest that people in polychronic cultures are better at multitasking. Rather, people in monochronic cultures, such as Northern Europe and North America, tend to schedule one event at a time. For them, an appointment that starts at 8 a.m. is an appointment that starts at 8 a.m.—or 8:05 at the latest. People are expected to arrive on time, whether for a board meeting or a family picnic. Time is a means of imposing order. Often the meeting has a firm end time as well, and even if the agenda is not finished, it's not unusual to end the meeting and finish the agenda at another scheduled meeting.

In polychronic cultures, by contrast, time is nice, but people and relationships matter more. Finishing a task may also matter more. If you've ever been to Latin America, the Mediterranean, or the Middle East, you know all about living with relaxed timetables. People might attend to three things at once and think nothing of it. Or they may cluster informally, rather than arrange themselves in a queue. In polychronic cultures, it's not considered an insult to walk into a meeting or a party well past the appointed hour.

In polychronic cultures, people regard work as part of a larger interaction with a community. If an agenda is not complete, people in polychronic cultures are less likely to simply end the meeting and are more likely to continue to finish the business at hand.

Those who prefer monochronic order may find polychronic order frustrating and hard to manage effectively. Those raised with a polychronic sensibility, on the other hand, might resent the "tyranny of the clock" and prefer to be focused on completing the tasks at hand.

2.1.22.1 What Else Determines a Culture?

The three approaches to the study of cultural values (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, Hofstede, and Hall) presented in this chapter provide a framework for a comparative analysis between cultures. Additionally, there are other external factors that also constitute a culture—identities, language, manners, media, relationships, and conflict, to name a few. Coming chapters will help us to understand how more cultural traits are incorporated into daily life.

2.1.22.1 Key Vocabulary

- collectivism
- ethnocentrism
- heterogeneous
- individualism
- uncertainty avoidance
- uncertainty reduction theory
- space
- power distance
- high vs. low context
- femininity vs. masculinity
- short-term orientation vs.
- long-term orientation
- polychronic cultures
- monochronic cultures
- proxemics
- values
- worldviews
- assumption
- co-culture

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2.2: Taxonomies of Cultural Patterns

Learning Objectives

- Explain the similarities and differences of Hall, Hofstede and the GLOBE Taxonomies.

To develop confidence in intercultural communication, you must understand differences in cultural patterns. Cultural patterns are the similar behaviors within similar situations we witness due to shared beliefs, values, norms and social practices that are steady over time. In this chapter, you will explore three different taxonomies, which help us understand similarities and differences in these cultural patterns. Specifically, we will examine Edward Hall's High-Low context cultural taxonomy, Geert Hofstede's six dimensions, and Shalom Schwartz's seven dimensions of culture. (Stokes Rice, 2019).[i]

2.2.1 Hall's High-Low Context Cultural Taxonomy

Anthropologist Edward Hall founded the field of intercultural communication in 1959 with his book *The Silent Language*. The book was originally intended for the general public, but it sparked academic research in intercultural communication and fueled interest in subjects like nonverbal communication, according to Keio Communication Review.[ii]

2.2.1.1 High and Low Context[iii]

Think about someone you are very close to—a best friend, romantic partner, or sibling. Have there been times when you began a sentence and the other person knew exactly what you were going to say before you said it? For example, in a situation between two sisters, one sister might exclaim, "Get off!" (which is short for "get off my wavelength"). This phenomenon of being on someone's wavelength is similar to what Hall describes as high context. In high context communication the meaning is in the people, or more specifically, the relationship between the people as opposed to just the words. When we have to rely on the translation of the words to decipher a person's meaning then this is said to be low context communication. The American legal system, for example, relies on low context communication.

While some cultures are low or high context, in general terms, there can also be individual or contextual differences within cultures. In the example above between the two sisters, they are using high context communication, however, America is considered a low context culture. Countries such as Germany and Sweden are also low context while Japan and China are high context.

Hall defines intercultural communication as a form of communication that shares information across different cultures and social groups. One framework for approaching intercultural communication is with high-context and low-context cultures, which refer to the value cultures place on indirect and direct communication.

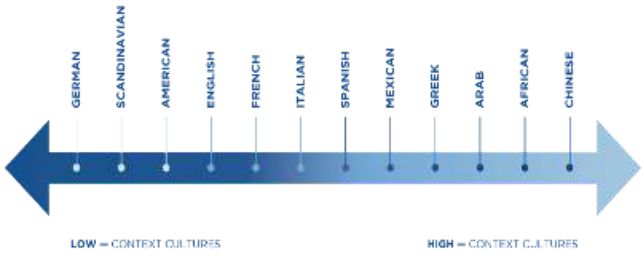

Figure 2.2.1: Low – High Context Cultures

2.2.1.1.1 High-Context Cultures

A high-context culture relies on implicit communication and nonverbal cues. In high-context communication, a message cannot be understood without a great deal of background information. Asian, African, Arab, central European and Latin American cultures are generally considered to be high-context cultures.

High-context cultures often display the following tendencies, according to C.B. Halverson's book *Cultural Context Inventory*.

- **Association**: Relationships build slowly and depend on trust. Productivity depends on relationships and the group process. An individual's identity is rooted in groups (family, culture, work). Social structure and authority are centralized.
- **Interaction**: Nonverbal elements such as voice tone, gestures, facial expression and eye movement are significant. Verbal messages are indirect, and communication is seen as an art form or way of engaging someone. Disagreement is personalized, and a person is sensitive to conflict expressed in someone else's nonverbal communication.
- **Territoriality**: Space is communal. People stand close to each other and share the same space.
- **Temporality**: Everything has its own time, and time is not easily scheduled. Change is slow, and time is a process that belongs to others and nature.
- **Learning**: Multiple sources of information are used. Thinking proceeds from general to specific. Learning occurs

by observing others as they model or demonstrate and then practicing. Groups are preferred, and accuracy is valued.

2.2.1.1.2 Low-Context Cultures

A low-context culture relies on explicit communication. In low-context communication, more of the information in a message is spelled out and defined. Cultures with western European roots, such as the United States and Australia, are generally considered to be low-context cultures.

Low-context cultures often display the following tendencies, according to Halverson:

- **Association**: Relationships begin and end quickly. Productivity depends on procedures and paying attention to the goal. The identity of individuals is rooted in themselves and their accomplishments. Social structure is decentralized.
- **Interaction**: Nonverbal elements are not significant. Verbal messages are explicit, and communication is seen as a way of exchanging information, ideas and opinions. Disagreement is depersonalized; the focus is on rational (not personal) solutions. An individual can be explicit about another person's bothersome behavior.
- **Territoriality**: Space is compartmentalized. Privacy is important, so people stand farther apart.
- **Temporality**: Events and tasks are scheduled and to be done at particular times. Change is fast, and time is a commodity to be spent or saved. One's time is one's own.
- **Learning**: One source of information is used. Thinking proceeds from specific to general. Learning occurs by following the explicit directions and explanations of others. Individual orientation is preferred, and speed is valued.

2.2.1.2 Communication Dynamics in High- and Low-Context Cultures

Cultural differences shape every aspect of global communication, says *Forbes* contributor Carol Kinsey Goman. This helps explain why people in Japan (a high-context culture) prefer face-to-face communication over electronic technology favored by other industrialized countries like the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Germany (low-context cultures).

High-context cultures also prefer personal bonds and informal agreements over meticulously worded legal documents. They "are looking for meaning and understanding in what is *not* said — in body language, in silences and pauses, and in relationships and empathy," Goman says. Meanwhile, low-context cultures "place emphasis on sending and receiving accurate messages directly, and by being precise with spoken or written words," she explains. U.S. business leaders often fall into a communication trap by disregarding the importance of building and maintaining personal relationships when interacting with people from high-context cultures.

People should also watch for differences within high- and low-context cultures. This classification is an oversimplification, according to A.C. Krizan and others in the book *Business Communication*. "For example, although American culture is classified as low context, communication among family members tends to be high context," they write. "Family relationships and members' high level of shared experiences require fewer words because of mutual understandings."

On the other hand, communication between two businesspersons from a low-context culture tends to be more specific and direct. Attention focuses more on what is said than relationships. In China or Japan, words receive less attention than relationships, mutual understandings and nonverbal body language.

2.2.1.2.1 Hofstede's Taxonomy[iv]

The theory of Hofstede's cultural dimensions constitutes a framework revolving around cross-cultural communication, which was devised by Geert Hofstede. The dimensions collectively portray the impact of the culture ingrained in society on the values of the members of that society. They also describe the relationship between these values and behavior, with the help of a structure based on factor analysis. In other words, this theory studies significant aspects of culture and provides them a rating on a comparison scale.

So far as international business is concerned, the dimensions of culture form an important facet. Knowledge of the manner in which different features of a business are viewed in different cultures, can help a manager in understanding and sailing successfully across the international business market.

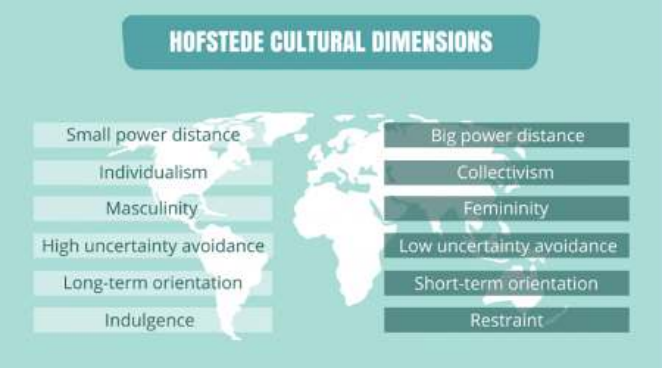

Figure 2.2.2: Hofstede cultural dimensions

In this article, we discuss the topic of Hofstede cultural dimensions by exploring 1) an **introduction**; 2) the **six cultural dimensions of Hofstede framework,** and using those dimensions to better understand cultures and people based on 3) a **case study of cultural differences**; 4) the **urgency of**

managing cultural difference as part of human resources management; and 5) **conclusion**.

2.2.1.2.2 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

The original model of Hofstede was the outcome of factor analysis done on a global survey of the value system of employees at IBM between the years 1967 and 1973. This theory was one of the initial ones which could quantify cultural differences.

The original theory that Hofstede proposed talked of four dimensions, namely power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism and masculinity vs. femininity. After conducting independent studies in Hong Kong, Hofstede included a fifth dimension, known as long-term vs. short-term orientation, to describe value aspects that were not a part of his original theory. Again in 2010, Hofstede devised another dimension, the sixth one, indulgence vs. self-restraint, in an edition of '*Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*', co-authored by Michael Minkov.

Hofstede's work serves as the base for other researches in cross-cultural psychology, inviting a number of researchers to study different aspects of international business and communication. These dimensions founded by Hofstede illustrate the deeply embedded values of diverse cultures. These values impact not only how people with different cultural backgrounds behave, but also the manner in which they will potentially behave when placed in a work-associated context.

This is a brief overview of the six cultural dimensions:

1. **Power Distance**: This dimension explains the extent to which members who are less powerful in a society accept and also expect that the distribution of power takes place unequally.
2. **Uncertainty Avoidance**: It is a dimension that describes the extent to which people in society are not at ease with ambiguity and uncertainty.
3. **Individualism vs. Collectivism**: The focus of this dimension is on the question regarding whether people have a preference for being left alone to look after themselves or want to remain in a closely knitted network.
4. **Masculinity vs. Femininity**: Masculinity implies a society's preference for assertiveness, heroism, achievement and material reward for attaining success. On the contrary, femininity represents a preference for modesty, cooperation, quality of life and caring for the weak.
5. **Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation**: Long-term orientation describes the inclination of a society toward searching for virtue. Short-term orientation pertains to those societies that are strongly inclined toward the establishment of the absolute truth.
6. **Indulgence vs. Restraint**: This revolves around the degree to which societies can exercise control over their impulses and desires.

2.2.1.2.3 Hofstede's Dimensions and Understanding Countries, Culture and People

According to Geert Hofstede, culture is the mind's collective programming that differentiates between one category of people and members of one group from another. The term 'category' might imply nations, religions, ethnicities, regions across or within nations, genders, organizations, or occupations.

#1: Power Distance

Power distance stands for inequality that is defined not from above, but from below. It is, in fact, the extent to which organizations and societies accept power differentials.

Societies with large power distance are characterized by the following features:

- Autocracy in leadership;
- Authority that is centralized;
- Paternalistic ways of management;
- A number of hierarchy levels;
- The acceptance of the privileges that come with power;
- A lot of supervisory staff;
- An expectation of power differences and inequality.
- Societies that have small power distance possess the following features:
- Participative or consultative style of management;
- Decision-making responsibility and authority decentralized;
- Flat structure of organizations;
- Supervisory staff small in proportion;
- Questioning the authority and lack of acceptance;
- An inclination toward egalitarianism;
- Consciousness of rights.

#2: Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which the members belonging to a society are capable of coping with future uncertainty without going through stress.

Weak uncertainty avoidance comes with the following features:

- Undertaking risk;
- Flexibility;
- Tolerance toward differing opinions and behaviors.

Strong uncertainty avoidance is represented by the following aspects:

- Tendency to avoid risk;

- Organizations that have a number of standardized procedures, written rules, and clearly delineated structures;
- Strong requirement for consensus;
- Respect for authority;
- Requirement for predictability highlighting the significance of planning;
- Minimal or no tolerance for deviants;
- Promotions depending upon age or seniority.

#3: Individualism vs. Collectivism

Individualism set against its opposite collectivism defines the extent to which individuals are inclined toward remaining in groups.

Individualistic cultures are characterized by:

- Fostering contractual relationships that revolve around the fundamentals of exchange. These cultures engage in the calculation of profit and loss prior to engagement in a behavior.
- Concentration on self or at the most very near and dear ones, and concern with behavioral relationships as well as own goals, interests, and needs.
- Emphasis on personal enjoyment, fun, and pleasure, over duties and social norms. They are a part of a number of in-groups which hardly have any influence on their lives.
- Self-sufficiency and value independence, and placement of self-interest over collective interest. Confrontation is accepted as an attribute.
- Stress on horizontal relationships (such as the relationship between spouse and spouse) rather than vertical relationships (such as the relationship between parent and child).
- The notion that they hold unique beliefs.

Collectivistic cultures are characterized by:

- Behavior as per social norms that are established for maintenance of social harmony among in-group members;
- Considering the wider collective with regards to implications of their actions;
- Sharing of resources and readiness to give up personal interest keeping in mind the collective interest;
- Favoring some in-groups (such as friends and family);
- Being a part of a few in-groups that have an influence on their lives. Rather than being individualistic, they have an increased inclination towards conformity;
- Increased concern regarding in-group members. They show hostility or indifference toward out-group members;
- Emphasis on harmony and hierarchy within group;
- Regulation of behavior with the help of group norms.

#4: Masculinity vs. Femininity

Masculinity and femininity revolve around the emotional role distribution between genders, which is again a prime issue in a number of societies.

Masculine cultures possess the following characteristics:

- Clearly distinct gender roles;
- Benevolence has little or no significance;

Men are expected to be tough and assertive with a concentration on material achievements;

- Much value is associated with mastery of people, nature, job, and the like;
- Sense of humor, intelligence, affection, personality are considered preferred characteristic traits of a boyfriend by the women;
- Understanding, wealth, and health are considered desirable characteristic traits of a husband by the women.

Feminine cultures possess the following characteristics:

- Overlapping of social gender roles;
- Men, as well as women, are expected to be tender, modest, with focus on the quality of life;
- Emphasis on the non-materialistic angles of success;
- The preferred traits in boyfriends and husbands are the same.

#5: Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation

This is based on the Confucian dynamism. According to the teachings of Confucius, the following aspects of life are evident:

- Unequal relationships existing between people ensure the stability of society.
- Every social organization has its prototype in the family.
- Virtuous behavior involves treatment meted out to others in a similar manner as one prefers to be treated oneself.
- So far as tasks in life are concerned, virtue comprises acquiring skills, working hard, education, being wise in spending as well as showing perseverance and patience.

Long-term orientation (high Confucian values) reflects the following:

- A futuristic, dynamic mentality;
- Emphasis on a relationship order depending on status, and observance of this order;
- Emphasis on persistence and perseverance;
- Stress on possessing a sense of shame;
- Stress on thrift;
- Positive association with economic growth;
- Inclination toward interrelatedness represented in sensitivity toward social contacts.

Short-term orientation (low Confucian values) is characterized by the following:

- Orientation toward past and present;
- Focus on respect for tradition;
- A comparatively static, more conventional mentality;
- Emphasis on saving face;
- Emphasis on personal steadiness;
- Focus on stability;
- Emphasis on reciprocation of gifts, favors, and greetings;
- Negative association with economic growth.

#6: Indulgence vs. Restraint

The dimension of indulgence vs. restraint focuses on happiness. A society that practices indulgence makes room for the comparatively free gratification of natural and basic human drives pertaining to indulging in fun and enjoying life. The quality of restraint describes a society that holds back need gratification and tries to control it through stringent social norms.

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***Think About It . . .* Country Comparison**

From years of research, Geert Hofstede organized 52 countries in terms of their orientation. Visit this website and at the bottom of the page go to the country comparison tool and begin exploring Hofstede's dimensions from different cultures.

When looking at Hofstede's research and that of others on individualism and collectivism, it is important to remember is that no culture is purely one or the other. Again, think of these qualities as points along a continuum rather than fixed positions. Individuals and co-cultures may exhibit differences in individualism/collectivism from the dominant culture and certain contexts may highlight one or the other. Also remember that it can be very difficult to change one's orientation and interaction with those with different value orientations can prove challenging. In some of your classes, for example, does the Professor require a group project as part of the final grade? How do students respond to such an assignment? In our experience we find that some students enjoy and benefit from the collective and collaborative process and seem to learn better in such an environment. These students have more of a collective orientation. Other students, usually the majority, are resistant to such assignments citing reasons such as "it's difficult to coordinate schedules with four other people" or "I don't want my grade resting on someone else's performance." These statements reflect an individual orientation.[v]

2.2.1.2.4 GLOBE Taxonomy

GLOBE stands from Global Leadership and Organization Behavior Effectiveness. It is a means of compiling information on what are the dominant patterns of a culture. The measures that are defined by Hofstede include: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, in-group collectivism, institutional collectivism, gender egalitarian ism, assertiveness, performance orientation, future orientation, and humane orientation. If a culture's numbers are above zero on the GLOBE scale, then they have high dimensions. If they are low on the GLOBE scale, they will be prone to have low dimensions.[vi]

- Power Distance: The degree to which people believe that power should be stratified, unequally shared, and concentrated at higher levels of an organization or government
- Uncertainty Avoidance: The extent to which people strive to avoid uncertainty by relying on social norms, rules, rituals, and bureaucratic practices to alleviate the unpredictability
- In-Group Collectivism: The degree to which people express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their families
- Institutional Collectivism: The degree to which a culture's institutional practices encourage collective actions and the collective distribution of resources
- Gender Egalitarianism: The extent to which people minimize gender role differences and gender discrimination while promoting gender equality
- Assertiveness: The degree to which people are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships
- Performance Orientation: The extent to which people encourage others to improve their task-oriented performance and excel.
- Future Orientation: The degree to which people engage in future orientated behaviors such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying gratification
- Humane Orientation: The degree to which people encourage others to be fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and king

The "Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness" (GLOBE) Research Program was conceived in 1991 by Robert J. House of the Wharton School of Business, University of Pennsylvania. In 2004, its first comprehensive volume on "Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies" was published, based on results from about 17,300 middle managers from 951 organizations in the food processing, financial services, and telecommunications services industries. A second major volume, "Culture and Leadership across the World: The GLOBE Book of In-Depth Studies of 25 Societies" became available in early 2007. It complements the findings from the first volume with in-country leadership literature analyses, interview data, focus group discussions, and formal analyses of printed media to provide in-depth descriptions of leadership theory and leader behavior in those 25 cultures. Cultural Dimensions and Culture Clusters:

GLOBE's major premise (and finding) is that leader effectiveness is contextual, that is, it is embedded in the societal and organizational norms, values, and beliefs of the people being led. In other words, to be seen as effective, the time-tested adage continues to apply: "When in Rome do as the Romans do." As a first step to gauge leader effectiveness across cultures, GLOBE empirically established nine cultural dimensions that make it possible to capture the similarities and/or differences in norms, values, beliefs –and practices—among societies. They build on findings by Hofstede (1980), Schwartz (1994), Smith (1995), Inglehart (1997), and others. They are: Power Distance: The degree to which members of a collective expect power to be distributed equally. Uncertainty Avoidance: The extent to which a society, organization, or group relies on social norms, rules, and procedures to alleviate unpredictability of future events. Humane Orientation: The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others. Collectivism I: (Institutional) The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action. Collectivism II: (In-Group) The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families. Assertiveness: The degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in their relationships with others. Gender Egalitarianism: The degree to which a collective minimizes gender inequality. Future Orientation: The extent to which individuals engage in future-oriented behaviors such as delaying gratification, planning, and investing in the future. Performance Orientation: The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence.[vii]

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[i] Stokes Rice, 2019

[ii] online.seu.edu/articles/high-and-low-context-cultures/

[iii] courses.candelalearning.com/...-by-culture-2/

[iv] https://www.cleverism.com/understanding-cultures-people-hofstede-dimensions/

[v] courses.candelalearning.com/...-by-culture-2/

[vi] http://tevinsic.blogspot.com/2012/03/cultural-patterns-and-communication_02.html

[vii] https://www.inspireimagineinnovate.com/pdf/globesummary-by-michael-h-hoppe.pdf

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2.3: Understanding Cultural Identity

Learning Objectives

1. Define personal, social, and cultural identities.
2. Summarize non-dominant and dominant identity development.
3. Explain why difference matters in the study of culture and identity.

2.3.1 Personal, Social, and Cultural Identities

Ask yourself the question "Who am I?" We develop a sense of who we are based on what is reflected back on us from other people. Our parents, friends, teachers, and the media help shape our identities. While this happens from birth, most people in Western societies reach a stage in adolescence where maturing cognitive abilities and increased social awareness lead them to begin to reflect on who they are. This begins a lifelong process of thinking about who we are now, who we were before, and who we will become (Tatum, B. D., 2000). Our identities make up an important part of our self-concept and can be broken down into three main categories: personal, social, and cultural identities (see Table "Personal, Social, and Cultural Identities").

We must avoid the temptation to think of our identities as constant. Instead, our identities are formed through processes that started before we were born and will continue after we are gone; therefore our identities aren't something we achieve or complete. Two related but distinct components of our identities are our personal and social identities (Spreckels, J. & Kotthoff, H., 2009). ***Personal identities*** include the components of self that are primarily intrapersonal and connected to our life experiences. For example, I consider myself a puzzle lover, and you may identify as a fan of hip-hop music. Our ***social identities*** are the components of self that are derived from involvement in social groups with which we are interpersonally committed.

Figure **2.3.1**: Pledging a fraternity or sorority is an example of a social identity. Adaenn – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Table 2.1 Personal, Social, and Cultural Identities

Personal	Social	Cultural
Antique Collector	Member of Historical Society	Irish American
Dog Lover	Member of Humane Society	Male/Female
Cyclist	Fraternity/Sorority Member	Greek American
Singer	High School Music Teacher	Multiracial
Shy	Book Club Member	Heterosexual
Athletic	Professional Skier	Gay/Lesbian

For example, we may derive aspects of our social identity from our family or from a community of fans for a sports team. Social identities differ from personal identities because they are externally organized through membership. Our membership may be voluntary (Greek organization on campus) or involuntary (family) and explicit (we pay dues to our labor union) or implicit (we purchase and listen to hip-hop music). There are innumerous options for personal and social identities. While our personal identity choices express who we are, our social identities align us with particular groups. Through our social identities, we make statements about who we are and who we are not.

Personal identities may change often as people have new experiences and develop new interests and hobbies. A current interest in online video games may give way to an interest in

graphic design. Social identities do not change as often because they take more time to develop, as you must become interpersonally invested. For example, if an interest in online video games leads someone to become a member of a MMORPG, or a massively multiplayer online role-playing game community, that personal identity has led to a social identity that is now interpersonal and more entrenched. Cultural identities are based on socially constructed categories that teach us a way of being and include expectations for social behavior or ways of acting (Yep, G. A., 2002). Since we are often a part of them since birth, cultural identities are the least changeable of the three. The ways of being and the social expectations for behavior within cultural identities do change over time, but what separates them from most social identities is their historical roots (Collier, M. J., 1996). For example, think of how ways of being and acting have changed for African Americans since the civil rights movement. Additionally, common ways of being and acting within a cultural identity group are expressed through communication. In order to be accepted as a member of a cultural group, members must be acculturated, essentially learning and using a code that other group members will be able to recognize. We are acculturated into our various cultural identities in obvious and less obvious ways. We may literally have a parent or friend tell us what it means to be a man or a woman. We may also unconsciously consume messages from popular culture that offer representations of gender.

Any of these identity types can be **ascribed** or **avowed**. Ascribed identities are personal, social, or cultural identities that are placed on us by others, while avowed identities are those that we claim for ourselves (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Sometimes people ascribe an identity to someone else based on stereotypes. You may see a person who likes to read science-fiction books, watches documentaries, has glasses, and collects Star Trek memorabilia and label him or her a nerd. If the person doesn't avow that identity, it can create friction, and that label may even hurt the other person's feelings. But ascribed and avowed identities can match up. To extend the previous example, there has been a movement in recent years to reclaim the label *nerd* and turn it into a positive, and a nerd subculture has been growing in popularity. For example, MC Frontalot, a leader in the nerdcore hip-hop movement, says that being branded a nerd in school was terrible, but now he raps about "nerdy" things like blogs to sold-out crowds (Shipman, 2007). We can see from this example that our ascribed and avowed identities change over the course of our lives, and sometimes they match up and sometimes not.

Although some identities are essentially permanent, the degree to which we are aware of them, also known as salience, changes. The intensity with which we avow an identity also changes based on context. For example, an African American may not have difficulty deciding which box to check on the demographic section of a survey. But if an African American becomes president of her college's Black Student Union, she may more intensely avow her African American identity, which has now become more salient. If she studies abroad in Africa her junior year, she may be ascribed an identity of American by her new African friends rather than African American. For the Africans, their visitor's identity as American is likely more salient than her identity as someone of African descent. If someone is biracial or multiracial, they may change their racial identification as they engage in an identity search. One intercultural communication scholar writes of his experiences as an "Asianlatinoamerican" (Yep, 2002). He notes repressing his Chinese identity as an adolescent living in Peru and then later embracing his Chinese identity and learning about his family history while in college in the United States. This example shows how even national identity fluctuates. Obviously one can change nationality by becoming a citizen of another country, although most people do not. My identity as a US American became very salient for me for the first time in my life when I studied abroad in Sweden.

Throughout modern history, cultural and social influences have established dominant and non-dominant groups (Allen, 2011). Dominant identities historically had and currently have more resources and influence, while non-dominant identities historically had and currently have less resources and influence. It's important to remember that these distinctions are being made at the societal level, not the individual level. There are obviously exceptions, with people in groups considered non-dominant obtaining more resources and power than a person in a dominant group. However, the overall trend is that difference based on cultural groups has been institutionalized, and exceptions do not change this fact. Because of this uneven distribution of resources and power, members of dominant groups are granted privileges while non-dominant groups are at a disadvantage. The main non-dominant groups must face various forms of institutionalized discrimination, including racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism. As we will discuss later, privilege and disadvantage, like similarity and difference, are not "all or nothing." No two people are completely different or completely similar, and no one person is completely privileged or completely disadvantaged.

2.3.1.1 Identity Development

There are multiple models for examining identity development. Given our focus on how difference matters, we will examine similarities and differences in non-dominant and dominant identity formation. While the stages in this model help us

understand how many people experience their identities, identity development is complex, and there may be variations. We must also remember that people have multiple identities that intersect with each other. So, as you read, think about how circumstances may be different for an individual with multiple nondominant and/or dominant identities.

2.3.1.1.1 Non-dominant Identity Development

There are four stages of nondominant identity development (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). The first stage is unexamined identity, which is characterized by a lack of awareness of or lack of interest in one's identity. For example, a young woman who will later identify as a lesbian may not yet realize that a nondominant sexual orientation is part of her identity. Also, a young African American man may question his teachers or parents about the value of what he's learning during Black History Month. When a person's lack of interest in their own identity is replaced by an investment in a dominant group's identity, they may move to the next stage, which is conformity.

In the conformity stage, an individual internalizes or adopts the values and norms of the dominant group, often in an effort not to be perceived as different. Individuals may attempt to assimilate into the dominant culture by changing their appearance, their mannerisms, the way they talk, or even their name. Moises, a Chicano man interviewed in a research project about identities, narrated how he changed his "Mexican sounding" name to Moses, which was easier for his middle-school classmates and teachers to say (Jones Jr., 2009). He also identified as white instead of Mexican American or Chicano because he saw how his teachers treated the other kids with "brown skin." Additionally, some gay or lesbian people in this stage of identity development may try to "act straight." In either case, some people move to the next stage, resistance and separation, when they realize that despite their efforts they are still perceived as different by and not included in the dominant group.

In the resistance and separation stage, an individual with a nondominant identity may shift away from the conformity of the previous stage to engage in actions that challenge the dominant identity group. Individuals in this stage may also actively try to separate themselves from the dominant group, interacting only with those who share their nondominant identity. For example, there has been a Deaf culture movement in the United States for decades. This movement includes people who are hearing impaired and believe that their use of a specific language, American Sign Language (ASL), and other cultural practices constitutes a unique culture, which they symbolize by capitalizing the *D* in *Deaf* (Allen, 2011).

Figure **2.3.3**: Many hearing-impaired people in the United States use American Sign Language (ASL), which is recognized as an official language. Quinn Dombrowski – ASL interpreter – CC BY-SA 2.0.

While this is not a separatist movement, a person who is hearing impaired may find refuge in such a group after experiencing discrimination from hearing people. Staying in this stage may indicate a lack of critical thinking if a person endorses the values of the nondominant group without question.

The integration stage marks a period where individuals with a nondominant identity have achieved a balance between embracing their own identities and valuing other dominant and nondominant identities. Although there may still be residual anger from the discrimination and prejudice they have faced, they may direct this energy into positive outlets such as working to end discrimination for their own or other groups. Moises, the Chicano man I mentioned earlier, now works to support the Chicano community in his city and also has actively supported gay rights and women's rights.

2.3.1.1.2 Dominant Identity Development

Dominant identity development consists of five stages (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). The unexamined stage of dominant identity formation is similar to nondominant in that individuals in this stage do not think about their or others' identities. Although they may be aware of differences—for example, between races and genders—they either don't realize there is a hierarchy that treats some people differently than others or they don't think the hierarchy applies to them. For example, a white person may take notice that a person of color was elected to a prominent office. However, he or she may not see the underlying reason that it is noticeable—namely, that the overwhelming majority of our country's leaders are white. Unlike people with a nondominant identity who usually have to acknowledge the positioning of their identity due to discrimination and prejudice they encounter, people with dominant identities may stay in the unexamined stage for a long time.

In the acceptance stage, a person with a dominant identity passively or actively accepts that some people are treated differently than others but doesn't do anything internally or externally to address it. In the passive acceptance stage, we must be cautious not to blame individuals with dominant identities for internalizing racist, sexist, or heterosexist "norms." The socializing institutions we discussed earlier (family, peers, media, religion, and education) often make oppression seem normal and natural. For example, I have had students who struggle to see that they are in this stage say things like "I know that racism exists, but my parents taught me to be a good person and see everyone as equal." While this is admirable, seeing everyone as equal doesn't make it so. And people who insist that we are all equal may claim that minorities are exaggerating their circumstances or "whining" and just need to "work harder" or "get over it." The person making these statements acknowledges difference but doesn't see their privilege or the institutional perpetuation of various "-isms." Although I've encountered many more people in the passive state of acceptance than the active state, some may progress to an active state where they acknowledge inequality and are proud to be in the "superior" group. In either case, many people never progress from this stage. If they do, it's usually because of repeated encounters with individuals or situations that challenge their acceptance of the status quo, such as befriending someone from a nondominant group or taking a course related to culture.

The resistance stage of dominant identity formation is a major change from the previous in that an individual acknowledges the unearned advantages they are given and feels guilt or shame about it. Having taught about various types of privilege for years, I've encountered many students who want to return their privilege or disown it. These individuals may begin to disassociate with their own dominant group because they feel like a curtain has been opened and their awareness of the inequality makes it difficult for them to interact with others in their dominant group. But it's important to acknowledge that becoming aware of your white privilege, for instance, doesn't mean that every person of color is going to want to accept you as an ally, so retreating to them may not be the most productive move. While moving to this step is a marked improvement in regards to becoming a more aware and socially just person, getting stuck in the resistance stage isn't productive, because people are often retreating rather than trying to address injustice. For some, deciding to share what they've learned with others who share their dominant identity moves them to the next stage.

People in the redefinition stage revise negative views of their identity held in the previous stage and begin to acknowledge their privilege and try to use the power they are granted to work for social justice. They realize that they can claim their dominant identity as heterosexual, able-bodied, male, white, and so on, and perform their identity in ways that counter norms. A male participant in a research project on identity said the following about redefining his male identity:

I don't want to assert my maleness the same way that maleness is asserted all around us all the time. I don't want to contribute to sexism. So I have to be conscious of that. There's that guilt. But then, I try to utilize my maleness in positive ways, like when I'm talking to other men about male privilege (Jones, Jr., 2009).

The final stage of dominant identity formation is integration. This stage is reached when redefinition is complete and people can integrate their dominant identity into all aspects of their life, finding opportunities to educate others about privilege while also being a responsive ally to people in nondominant identities. As an example, some heterosexual people who find out a friend or family member is gay or lesbian may have to confront their dominant heterosexual identity for the first time, which may lead them through these various stages. As a sign of integration, some may join an organization like PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), where they can be around others who share their dominant identity as heterosexuals but also empathize with their loved ones.

Figure **2.3.4**: Heterosexual people with gay family members or friends may join the group PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) as a part of the redefinition and/or integration stage of their dominant identity development. Jason Riedy – Atlanta Pride Festival parade – CC BY 2.0.

Knowing more about various types of identities and some common experiences of how dominant and nondominant identities are formed prepares us to delve into more specifics about why difference matters.

2.3.1.2 Difference Matters

Whenever we encounter someone, we notice similarities and differences. While both are important, it is often the differences that are highlighted and that contribute to communication troubles. We don't only see similarities and differences on an individual level. In fact, we also place people into in-groups and out-groups based on the similarities and differences we perceive. This is important because we then tend to react to someone we perceive as a member of an out-group based on the characteristics we attach to the group rather than the individual (Allen, 2011). In these situations, it is more likely that stereotypes and prejudice will influence our communication. Learning about difference and why it matters will help us be more competent communicators. The flip side of emphasizing difference is to claim that no differences exist and that you see everyone as a human being. Rather than trying to ignore difference and see each person as a unique individual, we should know the history of how differences came to be so socially and culturally significant and how they continue to affect us today.

Culture and identity are complex. You may be wondering how some groups came to be dominant and others nondominant. These differences are not natural, which can be seen as we unpack how various identities have changed over time in the next section. There is, however, an ideology of domination that makes it seem natural and normal to many that some people or groups will always have power over others (Allen, 2011). In fact, hierarchy and domination, although prevalent throughout modern human history, were likely not the norm among early humans. So one of the first reasons difference matters is that people and groups are treated unequally, and better understanding how those differences came to be can help us create a more just society. Difference also matters because demographics and patterns of interaction are changing.

In the United States, the population of people of color is increasing and diversifying, and visibility for people who are gay or lesbian and people with disabilities has also increased. The 2010 Census shows that the Hispanic and Latino/a populations in the United States are now the second largest group in the country, having grown 43 percent since the last census in 2000 (Saenz, 2011). By 2030, racial and ethnic minorities will account for one-third of the population (Allen, 2011). Additionally, legal and social changes have created a more open environment for sexual minorities and people with disabilities. These changes directly affect our interpersonal relationships. The workplace is one context where changing demographics has become increasingly important. Many organizations are striving to comply with changing laws by implementing policies aimed at creating equal access and opportunity. Some organizations are going further than legal compliance to try to create inclusive climates where diversity is valued because of the interpersonal and economic benefits it has the potential to produce.

2.3.1.2.1 "Getting Real"- Diversity Training

Businesses in the United States spend $200 to $300 million a year on diversity training, but is it effective? (Vedantam, 2008). If diversity training is conducted to advance a company's business goals and out of an understanding of the advantages that a diversity of background and thought offer a company, then the training is more likely to be successful. Many companies conduct mandatory diversity training based on a belief that they will be in a better position in court if a lawsuit is brought against them. However, research shows that training that is mandatory and undertaken only to educate people about the legal implications of diversity is ineffective and may even hurt diversity efforts. A commitment to a diverse and inclusive workplace environment must include a multipronged approach. Experts recommend that a company put a staff person in charge of diversity efforts, and some businesses have gone as far as appointing a "chief diversity officer" (Cullen, 2007). The US Office of Personnel Management offers many good guidelines for conducting diversity training: create learning objectives related to the mission of the organization, use tested and appropriate training methods and materials, provide information

about course content and expectations to employees ahead of training, provide the training in a supportive and noncoercive environment, use only experienced and qualified instructors, and monitor/evaluate training and revise as needed (US Office of Personnel Management, 2011). With these suggestions in mind, the increasingly common "real-world" event of diversity training is more likely to succeed.

1. Have you ever participated in any diversity training? If so, what did you learn or take away from the training? Which of the guidelines listed did your training do well or poorly on?

2. Do you think diversity training should be mandatory or voluntary? Why?

3. From what you've learned so far in this book, what communication skills are important for a diversity trainer to have?

We can now see that difference matters due to the inequalities that exist among cultural groups and due to changing demographics that affect our personal and social relationships. Unfortunately, there are many obstacles that may impede our valuing of difference (Allen, 2011). Individuals with dominant identities may not validate the experiences of those in nondominant groups because they do not experience the oppression directed at those with nondominant identities. Further, they may find it difficult to acknowledge that not being aware of this oppression is due to privilege associated with their dominant identities. Because of this lack of recognition of oppression, members of dominant groups may minimize, dismiss, or question the experiences of nondominant groups and view them as "complainers" or "whiners." Recall from our earlier discussion of identity formation that people with dominant identities may stay in the unexamined or acceptance stages for a long time. Being stuck in these stages makes it much more difficult to value difference.

Members of nondominant groups may have difficulty valuing difference due to negative experiences with the dominant group, such as not having their experiences validated. Both groups may be restrained from communicating about difference due to norms of political correctness, which may make people feel afraid to speak up because they may be perceived as insensitive or racist. All these obstacles are common and they are valid. However, as we will learn later, developing intercultural communication competence can help us gain new perspectives, become more mindful of our communication, and intervene in some of these negative cycles.

2.3.1.3 Key Takeaways

- Culture is an ongoing negotiation of learned patterns of beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors.
- Each of us has personal, social, and cultural identities.
  - Personal identities are components of self that are primarily intrapersonal and connect to our individual interests and life experiences.
  - Social identities are components of self that are derived from our involvement in social groups to which we are interpersonally invested.
  - Cultural identities are components of self based on socially constructed categories that teach us a way of being and include expectations for our thoughts and behaviors.
- Nondominant identity formation may include a person moving from unawareness of the importance of their identities, to adopting the values of dominant society, to separating from dominant society, to integrating components of identities.
- Dominant identity formation may include a person moving from unawareness of their identities, to accepting the identity hierarchy, to separation from and guilt regarding the dominant group, to redefining and integrating components of identities.
- Difference matters because people are treated differently based on their identities and demographics and patterns of interaction are changing. Knowing why and how this came to be and how to navigate our increasingly diverse society can make us more competent communicators.

2.3.2 Exercises

1. List some of your personal, social, and cultural identities. Are there any that relate? If so, how? For your cultural identities, which ones are dominant and which ones are nondominant? What would a person who looked at this list be able to tell about you?
2. Describe a situation in which someone ascribed an identity to you that didn't match with your avowed identities. Why do you think the person ascribed the identity to you? Were there any stereotypes involved?
3. Getting integrated: Review the section that explains why difference matters. Discuss the ways in which difference may influence how you communicate in each of the following contexts: academic, professional, and personal.

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2.4: Self and Identity

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, readers should:

- Understand the three components that make up the "self".
- Be able to explain how social comparison plays a role in self.
- Identify and define Co-cultural Communication Theory along with the role of in-groupers and out-groupers.
- Articulate what constitutes culture shock.
- Be able to discuss the various theories and models associated with culture shock.

To understand our communication interactions with others, we must first understand ourselves. Although each of us experiences ourselves as a singular individual, our sense of self is actually made up of three separate, yet integrated components: self-awareness, self-concept, and self-esteem.

- **Self Awareness** can be defined in many ways, including "conscious knowledge of one's own character, feelings, motives, and desires." (Google Dictionary 2/4/19) If the word "awareness" means consciously taking note of the world around us, then self-awareness should mean bringing an awareness to yourself. In other words, noticing your feelings, your reactions, your thoughts, your behaviors, and more. According to sociologist George Herbert Mead (1934), it helps if you have a strong sense of yourself because you monitor your own behaviors and form impressions of who you are through self-observation. As you are watching and observing your own actions, you are also engaging in **social comparison,** which is observing and assigning meaning to others' behavior and then comparing it with our own. Social comparison has a particularly potent effect on self when we compare ourselves to those we wish to emulate.
- **Self-concept** is your overall perception of who you thing you are. Self-concept answer the question of who am I? Your self-concept is based on the beliefs, attitudes, and values that you have about yourself. Identity and self-concept are so intertwined that any lasting desired change or improvement becomes very difficult (Fishe & Taylor, 1991).
- **Self-esteem** is how we value and perceive ourselves. Whereas self-awareness prompts us to ask, "Who am I?" and self-concepts answers that question, self-esteem lets us know how we feel about the answer. If the feeling is negative, then we have low self-worth or self-esteem and if the feeling is positive, then we have high self-esteem. Whether positive or negative, your self-concept influences your performance and the expression of that essential ability: communication. In addition to gender, friends, and family, our culture is a powerful source of self (Vallacher, Nowak, Froehlich & Rockloff, 2002). *Culture* is an established, coherent set of beliefs, attitudes, values, and practices shared by a large group of people (Keesing, 1974). If this strikes you as similar to the definition of *self-concept* and *worldview*, you are correct; culture is like a collective sense of self that is shared by a large group of people.

Thinking about intercultural communication in terms of self and identity has some important implications. First, *identities are created through communication*. As messages are negotiated, co-created, reinforced, and challenged through communication, identities emerge. Different identities are emphasized depending on the topic of the conversation and the people you are communicating with. Second, *identities are created in spurts*. There are long time periods where we don't think much about ourselves or our identities. Whereas other times, events cause us to focus on our identity issues and the insights gained modify our identities.

Third, *most individuals have developed multiple identities* because of membership in various groups and life events. Societal forces such as history, economics, politics, and communities influence identities. Fourth, *identities may be assigned by societies or they may be voluntarily assumed, but the forces that gave rise to particular identities are always changing.*

Lastly, it is important to remember that *identities are developed in different ways in different cultures.* Individualistic cultures encourage young people to be independent and self-reliant whereas collectivistic cultures may emphasize interdependency and the family or group.

There are many types of identities that humans can adopt or be assigned into. Identities can be organized around gender, sexual, age, race, ethnicity, physical ability, mental ability, religion, class, national, regional, and so on. Culture includes many types of large-group influences on identities. We learn our cultural beliefs, attitudes, and values from parents, teachers, religious leaders, peers, and the mass media (Gudykunst & Kim 2003).

At times, our various identities clash. When they do, we often have to choose the identity of which we value the most. In today's diverse world of interweaving cultures, it is an attractive notion to celebrate all one's identities by identifying as *multi-cultural*, but the reality still might be difficult to achieve.

2.4.1 Co-Cultures

As societies and nations become more culturally diverse, and awareness of how various cultures and the people within them interact, the more the idea of co-cultures takes root. Within any nation or society there will be a group or groups of people who have more power than other groups. Power generally comes from having control over governmental, economic, legal, or educational institutions. According to **Co-cultural Communication Theory**, the people who have more power within a nation or society, determine the *dominant culture*, because they get to determine the values and traditions of the nation or society (Orbe, 1998).

Members of a nation or society who do not conform to the dominant culture often form what are called *co-cultures* or cultures that *co-exist* within the dominant cultural perimeters (Orbe, 1998). By definition, co-cultures can range from slightly different to very different than the dominant culture, therefore, they develop communication practices that help them interact with people in the culturally dominant group (Ramirez-Sanchez, 2008). These practices can help co-cultures *assimilate* or attempt to become accepted into the dominant culture. The practices might also attempt to get the dominant culture to *accommodate* the co-culture, or *separate* from the dominant culture altogether. Examples of this might be using overly polite language with individuals from dominant cultures, attempting to look or talk like members of the dominant culture, or behaving in ways that shock or scare members of the dominant culture. Immigrants frequently form co-cultures in their new countries, which can lead to conflict between immigrant communities and the dominant culture.

2.4.2 Perception

Where did you start reading on this page? The top left corner. Why not the bottom right corner, or the top right one? In English we read left to right, from the top of the page to the bottom. But not everyone reads the same. If you read and write Arabic or Hebrew, you will proceed from right to left. Neither is right or wrong, simply different. You may find it hard to drive on the *other* side of the road while visiting England, but for people in the United Kingdom, it is normal and natural.

Your culture and identity strongly influences your perception. Whenever you interact with others, you interpret their communication by drawing on information from your stereotypes. Stereotyping is a term first coined by journalist Walter Lippmann (1922). When we stereotype others, we replace human complexities of personality with broad assumptions about character and worth based on social group affiliation. We stereotype people because it streamlines the perception process. Once we've categorized a person as a member of a particular group, you can categorize a person as a member of a particular group and form a quick impression of them (Macrae et al., 1999), which might be efficient for the communication process, but frequently leads us to form flawed impressions.

Although stereotyping is almost impossible to avoid, and most of us presume that our beliefs about other groups are valid, it's crucial to keep in mind that just because someone belongs to a certain group, it doesn't necessarily mean that all of the defining characteristics of that group apply to that person. Rigid stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination are detrimental to all aspects of the communication process and have no redeeming qualities within the human experience.

Communication patterns are filled with the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that you have learned in your own culture (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003), therefore, people raised in different cultures interpret one another's communication in very different ways. You may be from a culture that is collectivistic or values community and reads an advertisement that says: *Stand out from the crowd*. Given your cultural background, it may not be a very effective slogan because you do not want to stand out from the crowd.

Culture also effects whether you perceive others as similar or different from yourself. When you grow up within a certain culture, you naturally perceive those who are fundamentally similar to yourself as **ingroupers** and those who aren't perceived to be similar to yourself as **outgroupers** (Allport, 1954). You may consider individuals from a variety of co-cultures as your ingroupers as long as they share substantially similar points of culture with you, such as nationality, religious beliefs, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, or political views (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987).

Perceiving others as ingroupers or outgroupers is one of the most important perceptual distinctions that we make. We often feel strongly connected to our ingroups, especially when they are centrally tied to our identities and culture.

2.4.3 Culture Shock

When a person moves from to a cultural environment that is different than their own, they often experience personal disorientation called **culture shock.** It's common to experience culture shock when you are an immigrant, visit a new country, move between social environments, or simply become stressed by trying to deal with lots of new cultural information all at once. The impact intensifies due to the "need to operate" in unfamiliar and difficult contexts. Functioning without a clear understanding of how to succeed or avoid failure along with modifying your normal behavior tends to compound the

problem. As symptoms of culture shock intensify, the ability to function declines making culture shock an intense version of frustration.

Common symptoms of culture shock include: homesickness, feelings of helplessness, disorientation, isolation, depression, irritability, sleeping and eating disturbances, loss of focus, and more. Although most people recover from culture shock fairly quickly, a few find it to be profoundly disorienting, and take much longer to recover, particularly if they are unaware of the sources of the problem, and have no idea of how to counteract it.

Many studies have been done on when culture shock occurs and how to work through the stages. There is the **U-Curve Model** by Lysgaard (1955) that introduced the honeymoon, shock, recovery and adjustment stages. Or the **W-Curve Model** adapted by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) of honeymoon, culture shock, initial adjustment, mental isolation, and plus acceptance & integration. Adler (1975) proposed a "contact-disintegration-reintegration-autonomy-independence" model. Recently Ward, Bochner, & Furnham (2001), and Berado (2006) have proposed that the curve models do not reflect the universal reality. In *The Psychology of Culture Shock*, Ward, Bochner, & Furnham (2001) propose that learning new cultural specific skills in the affective, behavioral, and cognitive component areas will minimize the adverse effects of culture shock. Berado's (2006) cultural adjustment model identifies five key factors (routines, reactions, roles, relationships, and reflections) that are exposed when moving across cultural boundaries.

While the idea of culture shock remains a viable and useful explanatory term, some individuals never experiences symptoms while others encounter an amazing range of reactions. There appears to be no one-size-fits-all model. Some people skip certain stages, experience them in a different order, or have a longer or shorter adjustment period than others. What researchers do agree upon is that it is natural to feel some degree of culture shock.

Advice for dealing with culture shock varies as much the symptoms and is dependent upon individual traits. Helpful tips include:

1. Be flexible and try new things.
2. Get involved in the things that you already like.
3. Do not expect to adjust overnight.
4. Process your thoughts and feelings.
5. Use the resources available to help you handle the stress.

2.4.4 Vocabulary

- self awareness
- social comparison
- self-concept
- self-esteem
- Co-Cultural Communication Theory
- in-groupers
- out-groupers
- culture shock
- U-curve Model
- W-curve Model

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2.5: Social Construction of Cultural Identity

Learning Objectives

1. Define the social constructionist view of culture and identity.
2. Understand Race relations.
3. Trace the historical development and construction of the four cultural identities discussed.
4. Discuss how each of the four cultural identities discussed affects and/or relates to communication.

We can get a better understanding of current cultural identities by unpacking how they came to be. By looking at history, we can see how cultural identities that seem to have existed forever actually came to be constructed for various political and social reasons and how they have changed over time. Communication plays a central role in this construction. As we have already discussed, our identities are relational and communicative; they are also constructed. Social constructionism is a view that argues the self is formed through our interactions with others and in relationship to social, cultural, and political contexts (Allen, 2011). In this section, we'll explore how the cultural identities of race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability have been constructed in the United States and how communication relates to those identities. There are other important identities that could be discussed, like religion, age, nationality, and class. Although they are not given their own section, consider how those identities may intersect with the identities discussed next.

2.5.1 Race

Would it surprise you to know that human beings, regardless of how they are racially classified, share 99.9 percent of their DNA? This finding by the Human Genome Project asserts that race is a social construct, not a biological one. The American Anthropological Association agrees, stating that race is the product of "historical and contemporary social, economic, educational, and political circumstances" (Allen, 2011). Therefore, we'll define ***race*** as a socially constructed category based on differences in appearance that has been used to create hierarchies that privilege some and disadvantage others.

Figure **2.5.1**: There is actually no biological basis for racial classification among humans, as we share 99.9 percent of our DNA. Evelyn – friends – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Race didn't become a socially and culturally recognized marker until European colonial expansion in the 1500s. As Western Europeans traveled to parts of the world previously unknown to them and encountered people who were different from them, a hierarchy of races began to develop that placed lighter skinned Europeans above darker skinned people. At the time, newly developing fields in natural and biological sciences took interest in examining the new locales, including the plant and animal life, natural resources, and native populations. Over the next three hundred years, science that we would now undoubtedly recognize as flawed, biased, and racist legitimated notions that native populations were less evolved than white Europeans, often calling them savages. In fact, there were scientific debates as to whether some of the native populations should be considered human or animal. Racial distinctions have been based largely on phenotypes, or physiological features such as skin color, hair texture, and body/facial features. Western "scientists" used these differences as "proof" that native populations were less evolved than the Europeans, which helped justify colonial expansion, enslavement, genocide, and exploitation on massive scales (Allen, 2011). Even though there is a consensus among experts that race is social rather than biological, we can't deny that race still has meaning in our society and affects people as if it were "real."

Given that race is one of the first things we notice about someone, it's important to know how race and communication relate (Allen, 2011). Discussing race in the United States is difficult for many reasons. One is due to uncertainty about language use. People may be frustrated by their perception that labels change too often or be afraid of using an "improper" term and being viewed as racially insensitive. It is important, however, that we not let political correctness get in the way of meaningful dialogues and learning opportunities related to difference. Learning some of the communicative history of race can make us more competent communicators and open us up to more learning experiences.

Racial classifications used by the government and our regular communication about race in the United States have changed frequently, which further points to the social construction of race. Currently, the primary racial groups in the United States are African American, Asian American, European American, Latino/a, and Native American, but a brief look at changes in how the US Census Bureau has defined race clearly shows that this hasn't always been the case (see Table 3.1 "Racial Classifications in the US Census"). In the 1900s alone, there were twenty-six different ways that race was categorized on census forms (Allen, 2011). The way we communicate about race in our regular interactions has also changed, and many people are still hesitant to discuss race for fear of using "the wrong" vocabulary.

Table 3.1 Racial Classifications in the US Census. Source: Adapted from Brenda J. Allen, Difference Matters: Communicating Social Identity (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2011), 71–72.

Year(s)	Development
1790	No category for race
1800s	Race was defined by the percentage of African "blood." *Mulatto* was one black and one white parent, *quadroon* was one-quarter African blood, and *octoroon* was one-eighth.
1830–1940	The term *color* was used instead of *race*.
1900	Racial categories included white, black, Chinese, Japanese, and Indian. Census takers were required to check one of these boxes based on visual cues. Individuals did not get to select a racial classification on their own until 1970.
1950	The term *color* was dropped and replaced by *race*.
1960, 1970	Both *race* and *color* were used on census forms.
1980–2010	*Race* again became the only term.
2000	Individuals were allowed to choose more than one racial category for the first time in census history.
2010	The census included fifteen racial categories and an option to write in races not listed on the form.

The five primary racial groups noted previously can still be broken down further to specify a particular region, country, or nation. For example, Asian Americans are diverse in terms of country and language of origin and cultural practices. While the category of Asian Americans can be useful when discussing broad trends, it can also generalize among groups, which can lead to stereotypes. You may find that someone identifies as Chinese American or Korean American instead of Asian American. In this case, the label further highlights a person's cultural lineage. We should not assume, however, that someone identifies with his or her cultural lineage, as many people have more in common with their US American peers than a culture that may be one or more generations removed.

History and personal preference also influence how we communicate about race. Culture and communication scholar Brenda Allen notes that when she was born in 1950, her birth certificate included an *N* for Negro. Later she referred to herself as *colored* because that's what people in her community referred to themselves as. During and before this time, the term *black* had negative connotations and would likely have offended someone. There was a movement in the 1960s to reclaim the word *black*, and the slogan "black is beautiful" was commonly used. Brenda Allen acknowledges the newer label of *African American* but notes that she still prefers *black*. The terms *colored* and *Negro* are no longer considered appropriate because they were commonly used during a time when black people were blatantly discriminated against. Even though that history may seem far removed to some, it is not to others. Currently, the terms *African American* and *black* are frequently used, and both are considered acceptable. The phrase *people of color* is acceptable for most and is used to be inclusive of other racial minorities. If you are unsure what to use, you could always observe how a person refers to himself or herself, or you could ask for his or her preference. In any case, a competent communicator defers to and respects the preference of the individual.

The label *Latin American* generally refers to people who live in Central American countries. Although Spain colonized much of what is now South and Central America and parts of the Caribbean, the inhabitants of these areas are now much more diverse. Depending on the region or country, some people primarily trace their lineage to the indigenous people who lived in these areas before colonization, or to a Spanish and indigenous lineage, or to other combinations that may include European, African, and/or indigenous heritage.

Latina and *Latino* are labels that are preferable to *Hispanic* for many who live in the United States and trace their lineage to South and/or Central America and/or parts of the Caribbean. Scholars who study Latina/o identity often use the label *Latina/o* in their writing to acknowledge women who avow that identity label (Calafell, 2007). In verbal communication you might say "Latina" when referring to a particular female or "Latino" when referring to a particular male of Latin American heritage. When referring to the group as a whole, you could say "Latinas and Latinos" instead of just "Latinos," which would be more gender inclusive. While *Hispanic* is used by the US Census, it refers primarily to people of Spanish origin, which doesn't account for the diversity of background of many Latinos/as. The term *Hispanic* also highlights the colonizer's influence over the indigenous, which erases a history that is important to many. Additionally, there are people who claim Spanish origins and identify culturally as Hispanic but racially as white. Labels such as *Puerto Rican* or *Mexican American*, which further specify region or country of origin, may also be used. Just as with other cultural groups, if you are unsure of how to refer to someone, you can always ask for and honor someone's preference.

The history of immigration in the United States also ties to the way that race has been constructed. The metaphor of the melting pot has been used to describe the immigration history of the United States but doesn't capture the experiences of many immigrant groups (Allen, 2011). Generally, immigrant groups who were white, or light skinned, and spoke English were better able to assimilate, or melt into the melting pot. But immigrant groups that we might think of as white today were not always considered so. Irish immigrants were discriminated against and even portrayed as black in cartoons that appeared in newspapers. In some Southern states, Italian immigrants were forced to go to black schools, and it wasn't until 1952 that Asian immigrants were allowed to become citizens of the United States. All this history is important, because it continues to influence communication among races today.

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Think About It . . . **Race As a Social Construct**

The following article THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RACE: SOME OBSERVATIONS ON ILLUSION, FABRICATION, AND CHOICE explores the origins of the idea of race and how race is constructed. Read to page 21, were you aware of this information previously? How does this affect your ideas about the word race?

2.5.1.1 Interracial Communication

Race and communication are related in various ways. Racism influences our communication about race and is not an easy topic for most people to discuss. Today, people tend to view racism as overt acts such as calling someone a derogatory name or discriminating against someone in thought or action. However, there is a difference between racist acts, which we can attach to an individual, and institutional racism, which is not as easily identifiable. It is much easier for people to recognize and decry racist actions than it is to realize that racist patterns and practices go through societal institutions, which means that racism exists and doesn't have to be committed by any one person. As competent communicators and critical thinkers, we must challenge ourselves to be aware of how racism influences our communication at individual and societal levels.

We tend to make assumptions about people's race based on how they talk, and often these assumptions are based on stereotypes. Dominant groups tend to define what is correct or incorrect usage of a language, and since language is so closely tied to identity, labeling a group's use of a language as incorrect or deviant challenges or negates part of their identity (Yancy,

2011). We know there isn't only one way to speak English, but there have been movements to identify a standard. This becomes problematic when we realize that "standard English" refers to a way of speaking English that is based on white, middle-class ideals that do not match up with the experiences of many. When we create a standard for English, we can label anything that deviates from that "nonstandard English." Differences between standard English and what has been called "Black English" have gotten national attention through debates about whether or not instruction in classrooms should accommodate students who do not speak standard English. Education plays an important role in language acquisition, and class relates to access to education. In general, whether someone speaks standard English themselves or not, they tend to negatively judge people whose speech deviates from the standard.

Another national controversy has revolved around the inclusion of Spanish in common language use, such as Spanish as an option at ATMs, or other automated services, and Spanish language instruction in school for students who don't speak or are learning to speak English. As was noted earlier, the Latino/a population in the United States is growing fast, which has necessitated inclusion of Spanish in many areas of public life. This has also created a backlash, which some scholars argue is tied more to the race of the immigrants than the language they speak and a fear that white America could be engulfed by other languages and cultures (Speicher, 2002). This backlash has led to a revived movement to make English the official language of the United States.

Figure **2.5.2**: The "English only" movement of recent years is largely a backlash targeted at immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries. Wikimedia Commons – public domain. Courtesy of www.CGPGrey.com.

The US Constitution does not stipulate a national language, and Congress has not designated one either. While nearly thirty states have passed English-language legislation, it has mostly been symbolic, and court rulings have limited any enforceability (Zuckerman, 2010). The Linguistic Society of America points out that immigrants are very aware of the social and economic advantages of learning English and do not need to be forced. They also point out that the United States has always had many languages represented, that national unity hasn't rested on a single language, and that there are actually benefits to having a population that is multilingual (Linguistic Society of America, 2011). Interracial communication presents some additional verbal challenges.

Code-switching involves changing from one way of speaking to another between or within interactions. Some people of color may engage in code-switching when communicating with dominant group members because they fear they will be negatively judged. Adopting the language practices of the dominant group may minimize perceived differences. This code-switching creates a linguistic dual consciousness in which people are able to maintain their linguistic identities with their in-group peers but can still acquire tools and gain access needed to function in dominant society (Yancy, 2011). White people may also feel anxious about communicating with people of color out of fear of being perceived as racist. In other situations, people in dominant groups may spotlight nondominant members by asking them to comment on or educate others about their race (Allen, 2011). For example, I once taught at a private university that was predominantly white. Students of color talked to me about being asked by professors to weigh in on an issue when discussions of race came up in the classroom. While a professor may have been well-intentioned, spotlighting can make a student feel conspicuous, frustrated, or defensive. Additionally, I bet the professors wouldn't think about asking a white, male, or heterosexual student to give the perspective of their whole group.

2.5.2 Gender

When we first meet a newborn baby, we ask whether it's a boy or a girl. This question illustrates the importance of gender in organizing our social lives and our interpersonal relationships. A Canadian family became aware of the deep emotions people feel about gender and the great discomfort people feel when they can't determine gender when they announced to the world that they were not going to tell anyone the gender of their baby, aside from the baby's siblings. Their desire for their child, named Storm, to be able to experience early life without the boundaries and categories of gender brought criticism from many (Davis & James, 2011). Conversely, many parents consciously or unconsciously "code" their newborns in gendered ways based on our society's associations of pink clothing and accessories with girls and blue with boys. While

it's obvious to most people that colors aren't gendered, they take on new meaning when we assign gendered characteristics of masculinity and femininity to them. Just like race, gender is a socially constructed category. While it is true that there are biological differences between who we label male and female, the meaning our society places on those differences is what actually matters in our day-to-day lives. And the biological differences are interpreted differently around the world, which further shows that although we think gender is a natural, normal, stable way of classifying things, it is actually not. There is a long history of appreciation for people who cross gender lines in Native American and South Central Asian cultures, to name just two.

You may have noticed I use the word *gender* instead of *sex*. That's because ***gender*** is an identity based on internalized cultural notions of masculinity and femininity that is constructed through communication and interaction. There are two important parts of this definition to unpack. First, we internalize notions of gender based on socializing institutions, which helps us form our gender identity. Then we attempt to construct that gendered identity through our interactions with others, which is our gender expression. Sex is based on biological characteristics, including external genitalia, internal sex organs, chromosomes, and hormones (Wood, 2005). While the biological characteristics between men and women are obviously different, it's the meaning that we create and attach to those characteristics that makes them significant. The cultural differences in how that significance is ascribed are proof that "our way of doing things" is arbitrary. For example, cross-cultural research has found that boys and girls in most cultures show both aggressive and nurturing tendencies, but cultures vary in terms of how they encourage these characteristics between genders. In a group in Africa, young boys are responsible for taking care of babies and are encouraged to be nurturing (Wood, 2005).

Gender has been constructed over the past few centuries in political and deliberate ways that have tended to favor men in terms of power. And various academic fields joined in the quest to "prove" there are "natural" differences between men and women. While the "proof" they presented was credible to many at the time, it seems blatantly sexist and inaccurate today. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, scientists who measure skulls, also known as craniometrists, claimed that men were more intelligent than women because they had larger brains. Leaders in the fast-growing fields of sociology and psychology argued that women were less evolved than men and had more in common with "children and savages" than an adult (white) males (Allen, 2011). Doctors and other decision makers like politicians also used women's menstrual cycles as evidence that they were irrational, or hysterical, and therefore couldn't be trusted to vote, pursue higher education, or be in a leadership position. These are just a few of the many instances of how knowledge was created by seemingly legitimate scientific disciplines that we can now clearly see served to empower men and disempower women. This system is based on the ideology of patriarchy, which is a system of social structures and practices that maintains the values, priorities, and interests of men as a group (Wood, 2005). One of the ways patriarchy is maintained is by its relative invisibility. While women have been the focus of much research on gender differences, males have been largely unexamined. Men have been treated as the "generic" human being to which others are compared. But that ignores that fact that men have a gender, too. Masculinities studies have challenged that notion by examining how masculinities are performed.

There have been challenges to the construction of gender in recent decades. Since the 1960s, scholars and activists have challenged established notions of what it means to be a man or a woman. The women's rights movement in the United States dates back to the 1800s, when the first women's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 (Wood, 2005). Although most women's rights movements have been led by white, middle-class women, there was overlap between those involved in the abolitionist movement to end slavery and the beginnings of the women's rights movement. Although some of the leaders of the early women's rights movement had class and education privilege, they were still taking a risk by organizing and protesting. Black women were even more at risk, and Sojourner Truth, an emancipated slave, faced those risks often and gave a much noted extemporaneous speech at a women's rights gathering in Akron, Ohio, in 1851, which came to be called "Ain't I a Woman?" (Wood, 2005) Her speech highlighted the multiple layers of oppression faced by black women.

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Think About It . . . **"Ain't I a Woman?"**

Watch American actress and activist Alfre Woodard perform Sojourner Truth's famous speech "Ain't I a Woman?". What was the heart of Sojourner's message? How does this speech make you feel? Why?

Feminism as an intellectual and social movement advanced women's rights and our overall understanding of gender. Feminism has gotten a bad reputation based on how it has been portrayed in the media and by some politicians. When I teach courses about gender, I often ask my students to raise their hand if they consider themselves feminists. I usually only have a few, if any, who do. I've found that students I teach are hesitant to

identify as a feminist because of connotations of the word. However, when I ask students to raise their hand if they believe women have been treated unfairly and that there should be more equity, most students raise their hand. Gender and communication scholar Julia Wood has found the same trend and explains that a desire to make a more equitable society for everyone is at the root of feminism. She shares comments from a student that capture this disconnect: (Wood, 2005)

I would never call myself a feminist, because that word has so many negative connotations. I don't hate men or anything, and I'm not interested in protesting. I don't want to go around with hacked-off hair and no makeup and sit around bashing men. I do think women should have the same kinds of rights, including equal pay for equal work. But I wouldn't call myself a feminist.

It's important to remember that there are many ways to be a feminist and to realize that some of the stereotypes about feminism are rooted in sexism and homophobia, in that feminists are reduced to "men haters" and often presumed to be lesbians. The feminist movement also gave some momentum to the transgender rights movement. Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression do not match the gender they were assigned by birth. Transgender people may or may not seek medical intervention like surgery or hormone treatments to help match their physiology with their gender identity. The term *transgender* is the term that the present trans community uses and identifies with. Older terms that people used to refer to those who were transgender included *transsexual*, *transvestite*, and *cross-dresser*, although these words are not as appropriate or used as often in the present. As with other groups, it is best to allow someone to self-identify first and then honor their preferred label. If you are unsure of which pronouns to use when addressing someone, you can use gender-neutral language or you can use the pronoun that matches with how they are presenting. If someone has long hair, make-up, and a dress on, but you think their biological sex is male due to other cues, it would be polite to address them with female pronouns, since that is the gender identity they are expressing.

Gender as a cultural identity has implications for many aspects of our lives, including real-world contexts like education and work. Schools are primary grounds for socialization, and the educational experience for males and females is different in many ways from preschool through college. Although not always intentional, schools tend to recreate the hierarchies and inequalities that exist in society. Given that we live in a patriarchal society, there are communicative elements present in school that support this (Allen, 2011). For example, teachers are more likely to call on and pay attention to boys in a classroom, giving them more feedback in the form of criticism, praise, and help. This sends an implicit message that boys are more worthy of attention and valuable than girls. Teachers are also more likely to lead girls to focus on feelings and appearance and boys to focus on competition and achievement. The focus on appearance for girls can lead to anxieties about body image. Gender inequalities are also evident in the administrative structure of schools, which puts males in positions of authority more than females. While females make up 75 percent of the educational workforce, only 22 percent of superintendents and 8 percent of high school principals are women. Similar trends exist in colleges and universities, with women only accounting for 26 percent of full professors. These inequalities in schools correspond to larger inequalities in the general workforce. While there are more women in the workforce now than ever before, they still face a glass ceiling, which is a barrier for promotion to upper management. Many of my students have been surprised at the continuing pay gap that exists between men and women. In 2010, women earned about seventy-seven cents to every dollar earned by men (National Committee on Pay Equity, 2011). To put this into perspective, the National Committee on Pay Equity started an event called Equal Pay Day. In 2011, Equal Pay Day was on April 11. This signifies that for a woman to earn the same amount of money a man earned in a year, she would have to work more than three months extra, until April 11, to make up for the difference (National Committee on Pay Equity, 2011).

2.5.3 Sexuality

While race and gender are two of the first things we notice about others, sexuality is often something we view as personal and private. Although many people hold a view that a person's sexuality should be kept private, this isn't a reality for our society. One only needs to observe popular culture and media for a short time to see that sexuality permeates much of our public discourse.

Sexuality relates to culture and identity in important ways that extend beyond sexual orientation, just as race is more than the color of one's skin and gender is more than one's biological and physiological manifestations of masculinity and femininity. Sexuality isn't just physical; it is social in that we communicate with others about sexuality (Allen, 2011). Sexuality is also biological in that it connects to physiological functions that carry significant social and political meaning like puberty, menstruation, and pregnancy. Sexuality connects to public health issues like sexually transmitted infections (STIs), sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and teen pregnancy. Sexuality is at the center of political issues like abortion, sex education, and gay and lesbian rights. While all these contribute to sexuality as a cultural identity, the focus in this section is on sexual orientation.

The most obvious way sexuality relates to identity is through sexual orientation. Sexual orientation refers to a person's primary physical and emotional sexual attraction and activity. The terms we most often use to categorize sexual orientation are *heterosexual*, *gay*, *lesbian*, and *bisexual*. Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals are sometimes referred to as sexual minorities. While the term *sexual preference* has been used previously, *sexual orientation* is more appropriate, since *preference* implies a simple choice. Although someone's preference for a restaurant or actor may change frequently, sexuality is not as simple. The term *homosexual* can be appropriate in some instances, but it carries with it a clinical and medicalized tone. As you will see in the timeline that follows, the medical community has a recent history of "treating homosexuality" with means that most would view as inhumane today. So many people prefer a term like *gay*, which was chosen and embraced by gay people, rather than *homosexual*, which was imposed by a then discriminatory medical system.

The gay and lesbian rights movement became widely recognizable in the United States in the 1950s and continues on today, as evidenced by prominent issues regarding sexual orientation in national news and politics. National and international groups like the Human Rights Campaign advocate for rights for lesbian, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities. While these communities are often grouped together within one acronym (LGBTQ), they are different. Gays and lesbians constitute the most visible of the groups and receive the most attention and funding. Bisexuals are rarely visible or included in popular cultural discourses or in social and political movements. Transgender issues have received much more attention in recent years, but transgender identity connects to gender more than it does to sexuality. Last, *queer* is a term used to describe a group that is diverse in terms of identities but usually takes a more activist and at times radical stance that critiques sexual categories. While *queer* was long considered a derogatory label, and still is by some, the queer activist movement that emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s reclaimed the word and embraced it as a positive. As you can see, there is a diversity of identities among sexual minorities, just as there is variation within races and genders.

As with other cultural identities, notions of sexuality have been socially constructed in different ways throughout human history. Sexual orientation didn't come into being as an identity category until the late 1800s. Before that, sexuality was viewed in more physical or spiritual senses that were largely separate from a person's identity. Table 3.2 "Developments Related to Sexuality, Identity, and Communication" traces some of the developments relevant to sexuality, identity, and communication that show how this cultural identity has been constructed over the past 3,000 years.

Table 3.2 Developments Related to Sexuality, Identity, and Communication. Source: Adapted from Brenda J. Allen, Difference Matters: Communicating Social Identity (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2011), 117–25; and University of Denver Queer and Ally Commission, "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer History," Queer Ally Training Manual, 2008.

Year(s)	Development
1400 BCE–565 BCE	During the Greek and Roman era, there was no conception of sexual orientation as an identity. However, sexual relationships between men were accepted for some members of society. Also at this time, Greek poet Sappho wrote about love between women.
533	Byzantine Emperor Justinian makes adultery and same-sex sexual acts punishable by death.
1533	Civil law in England indicates the death penalty can be given for same-sex sexual acts between men.
1810	Napoleonic Code in France removes all penalties for any sexual activity between consenting adults.
1861	England removes death penalty for same-sex sexual acts.
1892	The term *heterosexuality* is coined to refer a form of "sexual perversion" in which people engage in sexual acts for reasons other than reproduction.
1897	Dr. Magnus Hirschfield founds the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in Berlin. It is the first gay rights organization.
1900–1930	Doctors "treat" homosexuality with castration, electro-shock therapy, and incarceration in mental hospitals.
1924	The first gay rights organization in the United States, the Chicago Society for Human Rights, is founded.
1933–44	Tens of thousands of gay men are sent to concentration camps under Nazi rule. The prisoners are forced to wear pink triangles on their uniforms. The pink triangle was later reclaimed as a symbol of gay rights.
1934	The terms *heterosexuality* and *homosexuality* appear in Webster's dictionary with generally the same meaning the terms hold today.
1948	American sexologist Alfred Kinsey's research reveals that more people than thought have engaged in same-sex sexual activity. His research highlights the existence of bisexuality.
1969	On June 27, patrons at the Stonewall Inn in New York City fight back as police raid the bar (a common practice used by police at the time to harass gay people). "The Stonewall Riot," as it came to be called, was led by gay, lesbian, and transgender patrons of the bar, many of whom were working class and/or people of color.
1974	The American Psychiatric Association removes its reference to homosexuality as a mental illness.
1999	The Vermont Supreme Court rules that the state must provide legal rights to same-sex couples. In 2000, Vermont becomes the first state to offer same-sex couples civil unions.
2003	The US Supreme Court rules that Texas's sodomy law is unconstitutional, which effectively decriminalizes consensual same-sex relations.
2011	The US military policy "Don't Ask Don't Tell" is repealed, allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly.

2.5.4 Ability

There is resistance to classifying ability as a cultural identity, because we follow a medical model of disability that places disability as an individual and medical rather than social and cultural issue. While much of what distinguishes able-bodied and cognitively able from disabled is rooted in science, biology, and physiology, there are important sociocultural dimensions. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines an individual with a disability as "a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment" (Allen, 2011). An impairment is defined as "any temporary or permanent loss or abnormality of a body structure or function, whether physiological or psychological" (Allen, 2011). This definition is important because it notes the social aspect of disability in that people's life activities are limited and the relational aspect of disability in that the perception of a disability by others can lead someone to be classified as such. Ascribing an identity of disabled to a person can be problematic. If there is a mental or physical impairment, it should be diagnosed by a credentialed expert. If there isn't an impairment, then the label of *disabled* can have negative impacts, as this label carries social and cultural significance. People are tracked into various educational programs based on their physical and cognitive abilities, and there are many cases of people being mistakenly labeled disabled who were treated differently despite their protest of the ascribed label. Students who did not speak English as a first language, for example, were —and perhaps still are—sometimes put into special education classes.

Ability, just as the other cultural identities discussed, has institutionalized privileges and disadvantages associated with it. Ableism is the system of beliefs and practices that produces a physical and mental standard that is projected as normal for a human being and labels deviations from it abnormal, resulting in unequal treatment and access to resources. Ability privilege refers to the unearned advantages that are provided for people who fit the cognitive and physical norms (Allen, 2011). I once attended a workshop about ability privilege led by a man who was visually impaired. He talked about how, unlike other cultural identities that are typically stable over a lifetime, ability fluctuates for most people. We have all experienced times when we are more or less able.

Perhaps you broke your leg and had to use crutches or a wheelchair for a while. Getting sick for a prolonged period of time also lessens our abilities, but we may fully recover from any of these examples and regain our ability privilege. Whether you've experienced a short-term disability or not, the majority of us will become less physically and cognitively able as we get older.

Statistically, people with disabilities make up the largest minority group in the United States, with an estimated 20 percent of people five years or older living with some form of disability (Allen, 2011). Medical advances have allowed some people with disabilities to live longer and more active lives than before, which has led to an increase in the number of people with disabilities. This number could continue to increase, as we have thousands of veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with physical disabilities or psychological impairments such as posttraumatic stress disorder.

Figure 2.5.3: As recently disabled veterans integrate back into civilian life, they will be offered assistance and accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Wounded Warrior Regiment – CC BY-NC 2.0

As disability has been constructed in US history, it has intersected with other cultural identities. For example, people opposed to "political and social equality for women cited their supposed physical, intellectual, and psychological flaws, deficits, and deviations from the male norm." They framed women as emotional, irrational, and unstable, which was used to put them into the "scientific" category of "feeblemindedness," which led them to be institutionalized (Carlson, 2001). Arguments supporting racial inequality and tighter immigration restrictions also drew on notions of disability, framing certain racial groups as prone to mental retardation, mental illness, or uncontrollable emotions and actions. See Table 3.3 "Developments Related to Ability, Identity, and Communication" for a timeline of developments related to ability, identity, and communication. These thoughts led to a dark time in US history, as the eugenics movement sought to limit reproduction of people deemed as deficient.

Table 3.3 Developments Related to Ability, Identity, and Communication. Source: Maggie Shreve, "The Movement for Independent Living: A Brief History," Independent Living Research Utilization, accessed October 14, 2011, ilru.org/html/publications/infopaks/IL_paradigm.doc.

Year(s)	Development
400 BCE	The Greeks make connections between biology, physiology, and actions. For example, they make a connection between epilepsy and a disorder of the mind but still consider the source to be supernatural or divine.
30–480	People with disabilities are viewed with pity by early Christians and thought to be so conditioned because of an impurity that could possibly be addressed through prayer.
500–1500	As beliefs in the supernatural increase during the Middle Ages, people with disabilities are seen as manifestations of evil and are ridiculed and persecuted.
1650–1789	During the Enlightenment, the first large-scale movements toward the medical model are made, as science and medicine advance and society turns to a view of human rationality.
1900s	The eugenics movement in the United States begins. Laws are passed to sterilize the "socially inadequate," and during this time, more than sixty thousand people were forcibly sterilized in thirty-three states.
1930s	People with disabilities become the first targets of experimentation and mass execution by the Nazis.
1970s	The independent living movement becomes a prominent part of the disability rights movement.
1990	The Americans with Disabilities Act is passed through Congress and signed into law.

During the early part of the 1900s, the eugenics movement was the epitome of the move to rehabilitate or reject people with disabilities (Allen, 2005). This was a brand of social engineering that was indicative of a strong public support in the rationality of science to cure society's problems (Allen, 2011). A sterilization law written in 1914 "proposed to authorize sterilization of the socially inadequate," which included the "feebleminded, insane, criminalistic, epileptic, inebriate, diseased, blind, deaf, deformed, and dependent" (Lombardo, 2011). During the eugenics movement in the United States, more than sixty thousand people in thirty-three states were involuntarily sterilized (Allen, 2011). Although the eugenics movement as it was envisioned and enacted then is unthinkable today, some who have studied the eugenics movement of the early 1900s have issued warnings that a newly packaged version of eugenics could be upon us. As human genome mapping and DNA manipulation become more accessible, advanced genetic testing could enable parents to eliminate undesirable aspects or enhance desirable characteristics of their children before they are born, creating "designer children" (Spice, 2005).

Much has changed for people with disabilities in the United States in the past fifty years. The independent living movement (ILM) was a part of the disability rights movement that took shape along with other social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The ILM calls for more individual and collective action toward social change by people with disabilities. Some of the goals of the ILM include reframing disability as a social and political rather than just a medical issue, a shift toward changing society rather than just rehabilitating people with disabilities, a view of accommodations as civil rights rather than charity, and more involvement by people with disabilities in the formulation and execution of policies relating to them (Longmore, 2003). As society better adapts to people with disabilities, there will be more instances of interability communication taking place.

Interability communication is communication between people with differing ability levels; for example, a hearing person communicating with someone who is hearing impaired or a person who doesn't use a wheelchair communicating with someone who uses a wheelchair. Since many people are unsure of how to communicate with a person with disabilities, following are the "Ten Commandments of Etiquette for Communicating with People with Disabilities" to help you in communicating with persons with disabilities:[1]

1. When talking with a person with a disability, speak directly to that person rather than through a companion or sign-language interpreter.
2. When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand

use or an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.)

3. When meeting a person who is visually impaired, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
4. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
5. Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others. (Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.)
6. Leaning on or hanging on to a person's wheelchair is similar to leaning or hanging on to a person and is generally considered annoying. The chair is part of the personal body space of the person who uses it.
7. Listen attentively when you're talking with a person who has difficulty speaking. Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for the person. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod, or a shake of the head. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond. The response will clue you in and guide your understanding.
8. When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair or a person who uses crutches, place yourself at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation.
9. To get the attention of a person who is deaf, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to determine if the person can read your lips. Not all people who are deaf can read lips. For those who do lip read, be sensitive to their needs by placing yourself so that you face the light source and keep hands, cigarettes, and food away from your mouth when speaking.
10. Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted, common expressions such as "See you later" or "Did you hear about that?" that seem to relate to a person's disability. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do.

2.5.4.1 Key Takeaways

- The social constructionist view of culture and identity states that the self is formed through our interactions with others and in relation to social, cultural, and political contexts.
- Race, gender, sexuality, and ability are socially constructed cultural identities that developed over time in relation to historical, social, and political contexts.
- Race, gender, sexuality, and ability are cultural identities that affect our communication and our relationships.

2.5.5 Exercises

1. Do you ever have difficulty discussing different cultural identities due to terminology? If so, what are your uncertainties? What did you learn in this chapter that can help you overcome them?
2. What comes to mind when you hear the word *feminist*? How did you come to have the ideas you have about feminism?
3. How do you see sexuality connect to identity in the media? Why do you think the media portrays sexuality and identity the way it does?
4. Think of an instance in which you had an interaction with someone with a disability. Would knowing the "Ten Commandments for Communicating with People with Disabilities" have influenced how you communicated in this instance? Why or why not?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Verbal Communication

3.1: Verbal Communication

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3.1: Verbal Communication

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, readers should:

- Identify and define basic linguistic terminology used to describe language.
- Understand and explain variations in communication styles and context rules.
- Identify and define the differences between translation and interpretation.
- Discuss the role that language plays in culture.
- Articulate what constitutes competence in intercultural communication.

How do you communicate? How do you think? We use language as a system to create and exchange meaning with one another, and the types of words we use influence both our perceptions and others interpretation of our meanings. Language is one of the more conspicuous expressions of culture. Aside from the obvious differences, vocabularies are actually often built on the cultural experiences of the users.

There are approximately 6500 languages spoken in the world today, but about 2000 of those languages have fewer than 1000 speakers (www.linguisticsociety.org, 2/10/19). As of 2018, the top ten languages spoken by approximately half the world's population are Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, English, Arabic, Hindi, Bengali, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese, and Ladhna or Pundjabi (www.statista.com, 2/10/19)). Chinese and Tamil are among the oldest spoken languages in the world (taleninstuut.nl, 2/10/19).

It is estimated that at least half of the world's languages will become extinct within the next century. Of the 165 indigenous languages still spoken in North America, only 8 are spoken by as many as 10,000 people. About 75 are spoken by only a handful of older people, and are believed to be on their way to extinction (www.linguisticsociety.org, 2/10/19)). When a language dies, a culture can die with it. A community's connection to its past, its traditions, and the links tying people to specific knowledge are abandoned as the community becomes part of a different or larger economic and political order (www.linguisticsociety.org, 2/10/19).

3.1.0.1 The Study of Language

Linguistics is the study of language and its structure. Linguistics deals with the study of particular languages and the search for general properties common to all languages. It also includes explorations into language variations (i.e. dialects), how languages change over time, how language is stored and processed in the brain, and how children learn language. The study of linguistics is an important part of intercultural communication.

Areas of research for linguists include **phonetics** (the study of the production, acoustics, and hearing speech sounds), **phonology** (the patterning of sounds), **morphology** (the patterning of words), **syntax** (the structure of sentences), **semantics** (meaning), and **pragmatic**s (language in context).

When you study linguistics, you gain insight into one of the most fundamental parts of being human—the ability to communicate. You can understand how language works, how it is used, plus how it is developed and changes over time. Since language is universal to all human interactions, the knowledge attained through linguistics is fundamental to understanding cultures.

3.1.0.1 Principles of Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is based on several basic principles. In this section, we'll examine each principle and explore how it influences everyday communication. Whether it's a simple conversation or a formal presentation, these principles apply to all contexts of communication.

3.1.0.1 Language Is Arbitrary and Symbolic

Words, by themselves, do not have any inherent meaning. Humans give meaning to them, and their meanings change across time. For example, we negotiate the meaning of the word "home," and define it, through visual images or dialogue, in order to communicate with our audience.

Words have two types of meanings: *denotative* and *connotative*. Attention to both is necessary to reduce the possibility of misinterpretation. The denotative meaning is the common meaning, often found in the dictionary. The connotative meaning is often not found in the dictionary but in the community of users itself. It can involve an emotional association with a word, positive or negative, and can be individual or collective, but is not universal. An example of this could be the term "rugged individualism" which comes from "rugged" or capable of withstanding rough handling and "individualism" or being independent and self-reliant. In the United States, describing someone in this way would have a positive connotation, but for people from a collectivistic orientation, it might be the opposite.

But what if we have to transfer meaning from one vocabulary to another? In such cases, language and culture can sometimes make for interesting twists. The *New York Times* Sterngold, J. (11/15/98) noted that the title of the 1998 film *There's*

Something About Mary proved difficult to translate when it was released in foreign markets. In Poland, where blonde jokes are popular and common, the film title (translated back to English for our use) was *For the Love of a Blonde.* In France, *Mary at All Costs* communicated the idea, while in Thailand *My True Love Will Stand All Outrageous Events* dropped the reference to Mary altogether. Capturing ideas with words is a challenge when the intended audience speaks the same language, but across languages and cultures, the challenge becomes intense.

3.1.0.1 Language Has Rules

Using language means following rules. **Constitutive rules** govern the meaning of words, and dictate which words represent which objects (Searle, 1964). **Regulative rules** govern how we arrange words into sentences and how we exchange words in oral conversations. If you don't know the various rules, you will struggle to communicate clearly and accurately with others. Consequently, others will also struggle to find meaning in your communication.

3.1.0.1 Language Evolves

Many people view language as fixed, but in fact, language constantly changes. As time passes and technology changes, people add new words to their language, repurpose old ones, and discard archaic ones. New additions to American English in the last few decades include *blog*, *sexting*, and *selfie*. Repurposed additions to American English include *cyberbullying*, *tweet*, and *app* (from application). Whereas *affright*, *cannonade*, and *fain* are becoming extinct in modern American English.

Other times, speakers of a language borrow words and phrases from other languages and incorporate them into their own. *Wisconsin*, *Oregon*, *and Wyoming* were all borrowed from Native American languages. *Typhoon* is from Mandarin Chinese, and *influenza* is from Italian.

3.1.0.1 Language Shapes Our Thought

Members of a culture use language to communicate their thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and values with one another, thereby reinforcing their collective sense of cultural identity (Whorf, 1952). Consequently, the language you speak, and the words you choose, announce to others who you are.

What would your life be like if you had been raised in a country other than the one where you grew up? Or suppose you had been born male instead of female, or vice versa. You would have learned another set of customs, values, traditions, other language patterns, and ways of communicating. You would be a different person who communicated in different ways.

It's not just the words themselves, or even how they are organized, that makes communication such a challenge. The idea that language shapes how we think about our world was first suggested by the research of Edward Sapir, who conducted an intensive study of Native American languages in the early 1900s. Sapir argues that because language is our primary means of sharing meaning with others, it powerfully effects how we perceive others and our relationships with them (Gumperz & Levinson, 1996). About 50 years later, Benjamin Lee Whorf expanded on Sapir's ideas in what has become known as the **Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis** or what is known today as **linguistic determinism**. Whorf argued that we cannot conceive of that for which we lack a vocabulary or that language quite literally defines the boundaries of our thinking.

Contemporary scholars noted that linguistic determinism suggests that our ability to think is constrained by language (Gumperz & Levinson, 1996) and therefore not realistic. Yet, both Sapir and Whorf, along with contemporary scholars, recognize the dramatic impact that culture has on language. Because language influences our thoughts, and different people from different cultures use different languages, most communication scholars agree that people from different cultures would perceive and think about the world in very different ways. This effect is known as **linguistic relativity**. Your language itself, ever changing and growing, in many ways determines your reality.

3.1.0.1 Cultural Variations in Language

As has been established, language is not culture free. If your intercultural communication is to be effective, you cannot ignore the broader cultural context that gives words meaning. We've discussed the linguistic issues of language, but what about the cultural issues of language? Cultural competency is a kind of knowledge of all of the other systems of ideas and beliefs shared by members of a community and transmitted through language (Bentahila & Davies, 1989). Cultural knowledge can keep second language learners from producing perfectly grammatically correct language yet embarrassingly inappropriate sentences.

Cultural rules about when and how certain speech acts can be performed may differ greatly. Routine formulas such as greetings, leave-taking, thanking, apologizing and so on do not follow the same, or even similar rules, across cultures causing misunderstandings and confusion. How language is used in a particular culture is strongly related to the values a culture emphasizes, and how it believes that the relations between humans ought to be.

3.1.0.1 Attitudes Towards Speaking, Silence, and Writing

In some cultures, such as the United States, speech is highly valued, and it is important to be articulate and well-spoken in personal as well as public settings. People in these cultures tend to use language as a powerful tool to discover and express truth, as well as to extend themselves and have an impact on others. Such countries tend to take silence as a sign of indifference, indignation, objection, and even hostility. The silence confuses and confounds them since it is so different from expected behavior. Many are even embarrassed by silence, and feel compelled to fill the silence with words so they are no longer uncomfortable. Or if a question is not answered immediately, people are concerned that the speaker may think that they do not know the answer. Countries reflecting these attitudes would include the United States, Canada, Italy, and other Western European countries.

Silence in some Asian cultures can be a sign of respect. If a person asks a question, it is polite to demonstrate that you have reflected on the question before providing an answer. In differences of opinion, it is often thought that saying nothing is better than offending the other side, which would cause both parties to lose face. Sometimes words do not convey ideas, but instead become barriers. Silence can convey the real intention of the speakers and can be interpreted according to the expected possibilities for speech or have more profound meaning than words.

In hierarchical cultures, speaking is often the right of the most senior or oldest person so others are expected to remain silent or only speak when spoken to and asked to corroborate information. In listening cultures, silence is a way to keep exchanges calm and orderly. In collectivistic cultures, it is polite to remain silent when your opinion does not agree with that of the group. In some African and Native American cultures, silence is seen as a way of enjoying someone's company without a need to fill every moment with noise. Or silence could simply be a case of the person having to speak in another language, and taking their time to reply.

The act of writing also varies widely in value from culture to culture. In the United States written contracts are considered more powerful and binding than oral consent. A common question is "did you get that in writing?" The relationship between writing and speaking is an important reinforcement of commitment. Other cultures tend to value oral communication over written communication or even a handshake over words.

3.1.0.1 Variations in Communication Styles

Communication style refers to both verbal and nonverbal communication along with language. Problems sometimes arise when people from different cultures try to communicate, and they tend to "fail to recognize the conventionality of the communicative code of the other, instead taking the communicative behavior as representing what it means in their own native culture" (Loveday, 1986). An understanding of communication style differences helps listeners understand how to interpret verbal messages.

- **High Context** cultures, such as China, Japan, and South Korea, are those in which people assume that others within their culture will share their viewpoints and thus understand situations in much the same way. Consequently, people in such cultures often talk indirectly, using hints or suggestions to convey meaning with the thought that others will know what is being expressed. In *high context* cultures, what is not said is just as important, if not more important, than what is said. *High context* cultures are very often collectivistic as well.
- **Low context** cultures on the other hand are those in which people do NOT presume that others share their beliefs, values, and behaviors so they tend to be more verbally informative and direct in their communication (Hall & Hall, 1987). Many *low context* cultures are individualist so people openly express their views, and tend to make important information obvious to others.
- **Direct/Indirect** styles are closely related to *high/low context* communication, but not exactly the same. Context refers to the assumption that speakers are homogeneous enough to share or implicitly understand the meanings associated with contexts. Whereas, *direct/indirect* refers directly to verbal strategies.
- **Direct** styles are those in which verbal messages reveal the speaker's true intentions, needs, wants, and desires. The focus is on accomplishing a task. The message is clear, and to the point without hidden intentions or implied meanings. The communication tends to be impersonal. Conflict is discussed openly and people say what they think. In the United States, business correspondence is expected to be short and to the point. "What can I do for you?" is a common question when a business person receives a call from a stranger; it is an accepted way of asking the caller to state his or her business.
- **Indirect** styles are those in which communication is often designed to hide or minimize the speaker's true intentions, needs, wants, and desires. Communication tends to be personal and focuses on the relationship between the speakers. The language may be subtle, and the speaker may be looking for a "softer" way to communicate there is a problem by providing many contextual cues. A hidden meaning may be embedded into the message because harmony and "saving face" is more important than truth and

confrontation. In indirect cultures, such as those in Latin America, business conversations may start with discussions of the weather, or family, or topics other than business as the partners gain a sense of each other, long before the topic of business is raised.

- **Elaborate and Understated** communication styles refer to the quantity of talk that a culture values and is related to attitudes towards speech and silence.
- **Elaborate** styles of communication refers to the use of rich and expressive language in everyday conversation. The French, Latin Americans, Africans, and Arabs tend to use exaggerated communication because in their cultures, simple statements may be interpreted to mean the exact opposite.
- **Understated** communication styles values simple understatement, simple assertions, and silence. People who speak sparingly tend to be trusted more than people who speak a lot. Prudent word choice allows an individual to be socially discreet, gain social acceptance, and avoid social penalty. In Japan, the pleasure of a conversation lies "not in discussion (a logical game), but in emotional exchange" (Nakane, 1970) with the purpose of social harmony (Barnlund, 1975).

3.1.0.1 Variations in Context Rules of Communication Styles

While there are differences in the preferred communication styles used by various cultures, it is important to remember that no particular culture will use the same communication style all the time. When a person either emphasizes or minimizes the differences between himself /herself and the other person in conversation, it is called **code-switching**. In other words, it's the practice of shifting the language that you use to better express yourself in conversations. According to **communication accommodation theory** (Auer, 1998) this can include, but is not limited to, language, accent, dialect, and vocalics or paralanguage.

There are many reasons why people may incorporate *code-switching* in their conversations. People, consciously and unconsciously, *code-switch* to better reflect the speech of those around them, such as picking up a southern accent when vacationing in Georgia. Sometimes people *code-switch* to ingratiate themselves to others. What teenager hasn't used the formal language of their parents when asking for a favor like borrowing the car or asking for money? *Code-switching* can also be used to express solidarity, gratitude, group identity, compliance gaining, or even to maintain the exact meaning of a word in a language that is not their own.

3.1.0.1 Language & Power

It has been said that all language is powerful and all power is rooted in language (Russell, 1938). Those who speak the same language not only can make themselves understood to one another, but the ability to make oneself understood promotes a feeling of belonging *together*. The identity-forming power of language is incredibly significant. Based on language, individuals will form small or large social groups that become societies, states, and nations. (Goethe-Institut, 2/11/19)

Co-cultural groups will be impacted differently by language and social position within a dominant culture or language group. One's social position influences how one interprets a communication context or how one is viewed by others within a dominant language group. *Co-cultural groups* are often expected to adopt or adapt to the dominant communication strategies.

3.1.0.1 Politics & Policies

Language management is going on all the time. Language policy is deeply embedded in beliefs people have about language, and centers around the question of who has the ability or the authority to make choices where language is concerned, and whose choices will ultimately prevail. This could manifest in official governmental recognition of a language, how language is used in official capacities, or protect the rights of how groups use and maintain languages.

Language policies are connected to the politics of class, culture, ethnicity, and economics. While some nations have one or more official language, the United States does not have an official legal language. Much debate has been raised about the issue, and twenty-seven states have passed Official English laws (USConstitution.net, 2/12/19). English is only the de facto national language. The European Union has 23 official languages, while recognizing over 60 indigenous languages.

3.1.0.1 Moving Between Languages – Translation & Interpretation

Because no one can learn every language, we rely on translators and interpreters. On the surface level, translation and interpretation seem to be much the same thing, with one skill relying on written texts and the other occurring orally. Both *translation* and *interpretation* enable communication across language boundaries from *source* to *target*. Both need deep cultural and linguistic understanding along with expert knowledge of the subject area and the ability to communicate clearly, but this is where the similarities end.

- **Translation** generally involves the process of producing a written text that refers to something written in another language. Traditionally, the *translator* would read the *source*

in its original language, decipher its meaning, then write, rewrite, and proofread the content in the *target* language to ensure the original meaning, style and content are preserved. Some *translators* use computer-aided tools to convert the *source* into a file type for electronic translation, then proof-read each section of the text for quality of content, meaning, and style in the *target* language. **Translators** are often experts in their fields of knowledge as well as linguists fluent in two or more languages with excellent written communication skills.

- **Interpretation** is the process of orally expressing what is said or written in another language. Contrary to popular belief, *interpretation* isn't a word-for-word translation of a spoken message. If it was, it wouldn't make sense to the target audience. *Interpreters* need to transpose the *source* language within the given context, preserving its original meaning, but rephrasing idioms, colloquialisms, and other culturally-specific references in ways that the *target* audience can understand. They may have to do this in a simultaneous manner to the original speaker or by speaking only during the breaks provided by the original speaker. **Interpreters** are also often experts in fields of knowledge, cultures, and languages with excellent memories.

The roles of **translators** and **interpreters** are very complex. Not everyone who has levels of fluency in two languages makes a good *translator* or *interpreter*. Complex relationships between people, intercultural situations, and intercultural contexts involve more than just language fluency, but rather culture fluency.

3.1.0.1 Intercultural Communication Competence

Has learning about another culture changed or enhanced your impressions for the better? The gateway to such connections is **intercultural communication competence.** Another way to view *intercultural communication competence* is the ability to communicate and behave in appropriate ways with those who are culturally different. You are *interculturally competent* when you adapt to cultural difference by co-creating spaces, teams, and organizations that are inclusive, effective, innovative, and satisfying. You can strengthen your intercultural communication competence by becoming more world-minded, practicing attributional complexity, and understanding communication accommodation theory.

3.1.0.1 World-Mindedness

By possessing **world-mindedness,** you demonstrated acceptance and respect toward other cultures' beliefs, values, and customs or *worldviews* (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003; Merryfield, et al (2008). Practicing *world-mindedness* happens in three ways. First, you must accept others' expression of their culture or co-culture as a natural element of their communication patterns (Chen & Starosa, 2005). Second, you should avoid any temptation to judge others' *worldviews* as "better" or "worse" than your own. Third, treat people from all cultures with respect.

By practicing *world-mindedness*, you are more than just tolerating cultural differences that you find perplexing or problematic, you are preserving others' dignity. *World-mindedness* is the opposite of **ethnocentrism** or the belief that one's own cultural beliefs, attitudes, values, and practices are superior to others'. *Ethnocentrism* is not the same thing as patriotism or pride in your own cultural heritage. You can be patriotic and proud of your own heritage without being *ethnocentric*! **Ethnocentrism** is a comparative evaluation where people view their own culture or co-culture as the standard against which all other cultures should be judged (Sumner, 1906; Neulip & McCroskey, 1997). Consequently, such people tend to view themselves as competent communicators and people from other cultures as incompetent communicators.

3.1.0.1 Attributional Complexity

Practicing **attributional complexity** means that you acknowledge that other people's behaviors have complex causes. You have the ability to observe others' behavior and analyze the various forces that might be influencing it. For example, rather than deciding that a reserved classmate is unfriendly, you might consider cultural theories about communication styles, and language usage before passing judgment.

In addition, you might check you might want to check your understanding of someone's words or behaviors. This is called **perception-checking,** and it's used to help us decode messages more accurately by avoiding assuming too much. *Perception-checking* is a three-part process that includes *description*, *interpretation*, and *clarification*. First, you should provide a description of the behavior that you noticed. For example, "you walked out of the room without saying anything." Second, you should provide one or two possible interpretations. Such as, "I didn't know if you were mad at me or if you were in a hurry." And thirdly, you should request clarification from the person about the behavior and your interpretation. As in, "could you help me understand this from your point of view?"

Perception-checking helps us try to see things from another perspective. It allows us to examine how people from other cultural backgrounds make decisions and allows us to make comparisons of their approaches to ours. And finally, it allows others to explain the reasons for their behavior and allows us to validate their explanations rather than challenging them.

3.1.0.1 Communication Accommodation

The last way to strive for *intercultural communication competence* is to embrace **communication accommodation theory** by meshing your communication with the behaviors of people from other cultures. People are especially motivated to adapt their communication when they see social approval, when they wish to establish relationships with others, and when they view the language use of others as appropriate (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). In contrast, when people wish to convey emotional distance and disassociate themselves from others, the accentuate the differences through communication.

So what does this mean for intercultural communicators? Try adapting to other people's communication preferences (Bianconi, 2002). Notice how long a turn people take when speaking, how quickly or slowly they speak, how direct or indirect they are, and how much they appear to want to talk compared to you. You may also need to learn and practice cultural norms for nonverbal behaviors, including eye contact, power distance, and touch. Use caution to avoid inappropriate imitation though. Mimicking could be considered disrespectful in some cultural contexts, whereas an honest desire to learn is often interpreted positively on the road to intercultural communication competence.

3.1.1 Vocabulary

- linguistics
- morphology
- phonetics
- phonology
- pragmatics
- semantics
- syntax
- constitutive rules
- regulative rules
- Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
- linguistic determinism
- linguistic relativity
- high-context
- low-context
- direct
- indirect
- elaborate
- understated
- translation
- interpretation
- intercultural communication competence
- world-mindedness
- attributional complexity
- perception-checking
- communication accommodation theory
- code-switching

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Nonverbal Communication

4.1: Nonverbal Communication

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4.1: Nonverbal Communication

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, readers should:

- Define nonverbal communication, understanding the differences between verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Describe the messages that nonverbal behavior communicates.
- Explain various types of nonverbal behavior using appropriate terms.
- Understand and observe cultural differences in nonverbal behavior.
- Understand the potential for intercultural miscommunication due to nonverbal behavior.

You might have studied a second language for many years, and considered yourself fluent, but still find it difficult to communicate with others when you travel to a country where that second language is spoken. Most of us have to live within a culture before we learn the nonverbal communication aspects of culture. Learning nonverbal communication is important and challenging. It's important because much communication meaning is conveyed nonverbally, and challenging because nonverbal communication is often multi-channeled and culture-specific.

Human beings all have the capacity to make the same gestures and expressions, but not all of those gestures and expressions have the same meaning across cultural boundaries. Types of nonverbal communication vary considerably based on culture and country of origin. Every culture interprets posture, gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, vocal noises, use of space, degree of territory, and time differently.

4.1.1 Principles of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is those aspects of communication, such as gestures and facial expressions, that do not involve verbal communication, but which may include nonverbal aspects of speech itself such as accent, tone of voice, and speed of speaking (Dictionary.com 3/3/19). In other words, **nonverbal communication** is communication through means other than language. A famous study by Albert Mehrabian (1971) found that 93% of communication meaning comes from nonverbal communication. Mehrabian posited that 7% came from the words, 38% through vocal elements, and 55% from through other elements such as facial expressions, posture, gestures, etc. More recent studies have indicated that determining the impact of nonverbal elements on communication meaning is extremely difficult, and results can vary from 60-93%.

In the bigger picture, the exact results don't matter as much as the fact that nonverbal communication can contribute to well-over half of the emotional or relational meaning of any given message. However you look at it, nonverbal elements are crucial to the study of communication. When comparing verbal and nonverbal communication, it's important to remember that both are symbolic, and both communicate meaning, but other aspects differ greatly.

Figure **4.1.1**: Two rock climbers who speak different languages communicate non-verbally.

4.1.2 Nonverbal Communication Uses Multiple Channels

When we use verbal communication, we use words, and we transmit through one channel at a time. We can speak words, read words, type words, or listen to words, but the channel is words. Nonverbally, when I talk to a friend, I listen to my friend's tone of voice, I watch my friend's facial expressions, use of eye contact, and gestures, and possibly touch them (multiple channels) all while trying to make sense of the words (one channel). Or to impress a possible romantic partner, I dress up in my most flattering clothes, put on cologne or perfume, fix my hair, and laugh at their jokes to indicate my interest in them.

4.1.3 Nonverbal Communication is More Ambiguous

Unlike most verbal communication, nonverbal communication and its meanings are primarily learned unconsciously. A smile can express friendliness, comfort, nervousness, and sarcasm, just as catching someone's eye can convey intimacy, humor, or a challenge, depending on the situation. This ambiguity can pose

difficulties for the interpretation of messages—especially across cultural boundaries. Chances are you have had many experiences where words were misunderstood, or where the meaning of words was unclear. When it comes to nonverbal communication, meaning is even harder to discern. We can sometimes tell what people are communicating through their nonverbal communication, but there is no foolproof "dictionary" of how to interpret nonverbal messages.

Some nonverbal behaviors are learned as part of being socialized into a culture. In the United States, we often shake hands when meeting someone new in a formal situation. Words such as "hi, I'm Karen" along with a firm handshake are general expectations in business settings. Or, "it was so nice to meet you" and another firm handshake at parting.

4.1.4 Nonverbal Communication Has Fewer Rules

One reason that nonverbal communication is more ambiguous than verbal communication is because it is governed by fewer rules—and most of those will be informal norms. Verbal communication has literally thousands of rules governing grammar, spelling, pronunciation, usage, meaning, and more. Yes, your parents might tell you to "it's not polite to stare at people," but most of these declarations are considered models of good behavior and not something that dictates the meaning of a communication act.

Popular culture is filled with references to "body language" and promises that you can read your boss/lover/parent/friend like a book by the end of the article/tweet/video. Because nonverbal communication is ambiguous, has fewer rules, and co-creates meaning with verbal communication, it would be impossible to teach a universal shorthand for interpreting how individuals express attitudes and emotions through their bodies. There is not a universal code used that could be considered as a "language of the body" with conventionalized meanings which equate to the components that constitute spoken language (Haller & Peeters, retrieved 2/13/19).

4.1.5 Nonverbal Messages Communicate Emotions and Meaning

When we interact with others, we monitor many channels besides their words to determine meaning. Where does a wink start and a nod end? Nonverbal communication involves the entire body, the space it occupies and dominates, the time it interacts, and not only what is not said, but how it is not said. Nonverbal action flows almost seamlessly from one to the next, creating an intention of meaning in the mind of the receiver.

Nonverbal communication often gives our thoughts and feelings away before we are even aware of what we are thinking or how we feel. People may see and hear more than you ever anticipated. Your nonverbal communication includes both **intentional** and **unintentional** messages, but since it all happens so fast, the *unintentional* ones can contradict what you know you are supposed to say or how you are supposed to react.

Our reliance on nonverbal communication becomes even more intense when people display **mixed messages** or verbal and nonverbal behaviors that convey contradictory meanings (Burgoon & Hoobler, 2002). In such cases, we almost always trust the nonverbal message over the verbal one as nonverbal behavior is believed to operate at the unconscious level. Still, we often assign intentional motives to nonverbal communication when in fact their meaning is unintentional, and hard to interpret.

Nonverbal behavior also communicates status and power. Touch, posture, gestures, use of space and territory, are good indicators of how power is distributed in the relationship, and the perks that status brings. And although research indicates that deceptive behaviors are idiosyncratic to particular individual people, the interplay between verbal and nonverbal can help receivers determine deception.

4.1.6 Nonverbal Communication is Influenced by Culture

The close bond between culture and nonverbal communication makes true intercultural communication difficult to master. Yes, some cues can be learned, but because nonverbal is ambiguous and has fewer rules, it takes most people many years of immersion within a culture before they can fully understand the subtle meanings encompassed within that culture's nonverbal communication (Chen & Starosta, 2005).

In a 2009 meeting with the emperor of Japan, then president Barak Obama, bowed rather deeply in greeting. US conservative commentators called the bow 'treasonous' while former vice-president, Dick Cheney, believed that "there was no reason for an American president to bow to anyone" (Slate, retrieved 3/8/19). The Japanese press, on the other hand, acknowledged the bow as a sign of respect, but believed the 45 degree bend or 'seikeirei' bow to be much more exaggerated than it needed to be.

4.1.7 Nonverbal and Verbal Communication Work Together to Create Communication

Despite the differences between verbal and nonverbal forms of communication, and the importance of nonverbal noted by Mehrabian and others, both forms are essential. They both work together to create meaning (Jones & LeBaron, 2002). As communicators, we do not experience or express them separately, but rather jointly to create meaning (Birdwhistell,

1973). We need *both* to communicate competently. Nonverbal communication can reinforce, substitute for, and contradict verbal communication, but it can never be the words—and we need the words as that tip of the iceberg to have a focus for the meaning and feelings that are being displayed.

4.1.8 Types of Nonverbal Behaviors or Codes

One reason that nonverbal communication is so rich with information is that humans use so many different aspects of behavior, appearance, and environment to convey meaning. Scholars call the different means used for transmitting information **nonverbal communication codes** (Burgoon & Hoobler, 2002). The seven general codes for nonverbal communication are: kinesics, vocalics, proxemics, haptics, chronemics, physical appearance, artifacts, and environment.

The cultural patterns embedded in nonverbal codes should be used not as stereotypes for all members of particular cultures, but rather as tentative guidelines or examples to help you understand the great variation of nonverbal behavior in humans. Bodenhausen, Todd & Richeson (2009) remind us that prejudice is often based on certain aspects of nonverbal behavior such as appearance. Reread chapter XXX for a reminder how prejudice can hinder the communication process.

- **Kinesics** is thought by some to be the richest nonverbal code in terms of its power to communicate meaning, **kinesics** includes most of the behaviors we usually associate with nonverbal communication. The word *kinesics* comes from the Greek word, *kinesis*, meaning "movement," and includes facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, and posture.
- **Facial Expressions** communicate an endless stream of emotions, and we make judgements about what others are feeling by assessing their **faces**. Our use of emoticons to communicate attitudes and emotions in electronic media testifies to the importance of this type of kinesics. In fact, some scholars argue that *facial expressions* rank first among all forms of communication (Knapp & Hall, 2002). Cultural rules often regulate *facial expressions*. You might have been taught that smiles are universal, but that simply is not true. Most human beings can smile, but cultures value and interpret smiles in different ways. In other words, the meaning behind a smile is not universal. For example, in Russian, people do not smile because it implies that you are foolish, or possibly sneaky and manipulative. Even family photos, adults often appear with flat or scowling faces. Many Hispanic cultures prefer a proud and elegant facial appearance, which does not include smiling. In Japan, smiling is a way to show respect or to hide what you are actually feeling. In the United States, we smile to show a pleasant face to the people around us, to express happiness, gratitude, and even when we are nervous. We often tend to smile for the purposes of getting along with others (Solomon, 2017).
- **Eye contact**, *or Oculesics*, serves many purposes. We use our eyes to express emotions, regulate a conversation, indicate listening behavior, show interest in others, respect, status, hostility, and aggression (Burgoon, Buller & Woodall, 1996). Patterns of eye contact vary significantly by culture. Generally, **eye contact** is considered a good thing in the United States. It can mean that you are interested, confident, and bold (a good thing), but people often avoid **eye contact** in crowded, impersonal situations such as walking down a busy street or riding a crowded bus. In France, however, someone may feel free to watch someone interesting on the street and consciously make eye contact to indicate interest. In the Middle East, direct **eye contact** is less common and generally less appropriate, whereas lack of **eye contact** in Asia is often a sign of respect and considered polite.
- **Gestures** are arm and hand movements used for communication**.** There are at least four different kinds of gestures that we should consider: **emblems**, **illustrators**, **regulators**, and **adaptors**. The type of **gesture** known as **emblems** represent a specific verbal meaning and can replace or reinforce words (Ekman, 1976). If you are driving down a busy highway in the United States, and another driver quickly changes lanes in front of your car, making you hit the brakes, you can flip them off to easily convey meaning without using any words at all. With **emblems,** gestures and its verbal meaning are interchangeable, but they are also very culturally specific. If the person who changed lanes abruptly is from another culture, they may have no idea what your **emblem** means.
- **Illustrators,** or **emblematic** nonverbal communications, are a nonverbal gesture used to communicate our message effectively and reinforce our point. Your grandfather may describe the fish he just caught and hold up his two hands 36 inches apart to **illustrate** exactly how big the fish was.
- **Regulators** are nonverbal messages which control, maintain or discourage interaction. (McLean, 2003). For example, if someone is telling you a message that is confusing or upsetting, you may hold up your hand, a commonly recognized regulator that asks the speaker to stop talking.
- **Adaptors** help us feel comfortable or indicate emotions or moods. An **adaptor** could involve you meeting your need for security, by playing with your hair for example, or hugging yourself for warmth.
- **Posture is t**he last item in our list of kinesics**.** Humans can stand up straight or slouch, lean forward or backward, round or slump our shoulders, and tilt our heads. Mehrabian (1972) believed that posture communicates **immediacy** and **power**.

Immediacy is the degree to which you find someone interesting and attractive. Typically, when someone from the United States finds someone attractive, they face the person when talking, hold their head up, and lean in. Whereas a reaction to someone they don't like might have them look away and lean back. **Power** is the ability to influence people or events. In the United States, high-status communicators typically use relaxed postures (Burgoon et al., 1996), but in Japan, the opposite is true. Japanese display power through erect posture with feel planted firmly on the floor.

4.1.9 Vocalics

Vocal characteristics we use to communicate nonverbal messages are called **vocalics** or *paralanguage* (with-language)**.** *Vocalics* involves verbal and nonverbal aspects of speech that influence meaning, including rate, pitch, tone, volume, intensity, pausing, and even silence. As previously discussed, silence or vocal pauses can communicate hesitation, indicate the need to gather thought, or serve as a sign of respect. Sometimes we learn just as much, or even more, from what a person does not say as what they do say.

4.1.10 Proxemics

Coming from the Latin *proximus*, meaning "near," **proxemics** refers to communication through the use of physical distance or space. When we discuss space in a nonverbal context, we mean the space between objects and people. Space is often associated with social rank and is an important part of communication. Who gets the corner office? Who sits at the head of the table and why?

People from diverse cultures may have different normative space expectations. If you are from a large urban area, having people stand close to you may be normal. If you are from a culture where people expect more space, someone may be standing "too close" for comfort and not know it.

Edward T. Hall, serving in the European and South Pacific Regions in the Corps of Engineers during World War II, traveled around the globe. As he moved from one place to another, he noticed that people in different countries kept different distances from each other. In France, they stood closer to each other than they did in England. Hall (1963) wondered why that was and came up with a theory on spatial relations and boundaries.

The first aspect, Hall called "**territory**" and it is related to control. As a way of establishing control over your own room, maybe you painted it your favorite color, or put up posters that represent your interests or things you consider unique about yourself. Territory means the space you claim as your own, are responsible for, or are willing to defend.

The second aspect Hall highlights is **conversation distance**, or the "bubble" of space surrounding each individual. We recognize the basic need for personal space, but the normative expectations for space vary greatly by culture. In the United States, **intimate space** ranges from 0-18 inches. **Personal space** is the distance we occupy during encounters with friends and ranges from 18 inches to 4 feet. Many people use **social space** in social situations or with strangers, and ranges from 4 to 12 feet. In **public space**, the distance ranges from 12 feet and beyond. North American use of space tends to be much larger than most other cultures, especially people from Latin America and the Middle East where such vast use of personal space will make you seem aloof or distant.

4.1.11 Haptics

Touch in communication interaction is called **haptics**, from the ancient Greek word *"haptien."* Touch can vary based on its duration, the part of the body being touched, and the strength of the contact (Floyd, 1999).

Cultural norms have a strong impact on how people use and perceive touch. For example, Hispanic cultures tend to hug more than do Europeans. Researchers in a study at outdoor cafes in London, England and San Juan, Puerto Rico found that Puerto Ricans touched each other an average of 180 times per hour whereas the British average was zero (EPA, 2002).

Hall (1963) suggests that the use of *proxemics* and *haptics* merge within a culture to create what researchers now call *contact* and *noncontact* cultures. In **contactcultures**, people stand closer together while talking, make more direct eye contact, touch more frequently, and speak in louder voices. Some examples of *contact cultures* would be South America, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe with the Middle East being the highest contact.

In **noncontact cultures**, people stand farther apart while talking, maintain less eye contact, and touch less. Some examples of *noncontact cultures* would be Great Britain, the United States, and Japan.

4.1.12 Chronemics

Chronemics is the study of how we refer to and perceive time. Cultures vary widely in their *time orientation*, although context can also play a major role as well. "Time is money" is a common saying across cultures that display a high value for time. In social contexts, time often reveals social status and power. Who are you willing to wait for? A doctor for an office visit when you are sick? A potential employer for a job interview? Your significant other or children?

Some Mexican American friends may invite you to a barbecue at 8 p.m., but when you arrive you are the first guest, because it is understood that the gathering actually doesn't start until after 9 p.m. Similarly in France, an 8 p.m. party invitation would be understood to indicate you should arrive around 8:30, but in Sweden 8 p.m. means 8 p.m., and latecomers may not be welcome.

In the United States, we perceive time as linear, flowing along in a straight line. We did one task, we're doing another task now, and we are planning on doing something else later. In **monochronic** time orientation, time is a commodity. Being punctual, completing tasks, and keeping schedules is valued, and may be more important than building or maintaining personal relationships.

In **polychronic** time orientation, time is more holistic and circular. It is expected that many events happen at once, and things get done because of personal relationships, not in spite of personal relationships. The Euro Railways trains in Germany are famous for departing and arriving according to the schedule no matter what. In contrast, if you take the train in Argentina, you'll find that the schedule is more of an approximation of when the train will leave or arrive. Engineers, conductors, and even passengers influence the schedule, not a clock.

4.1.13 Physical Appearance

Visible attributes such as hair, clothing, body type, personal grooming, jewelry, glasses, backpacks, briefcases, and purses profoundly influence our communication encounters. In other words, how you look conveys as much about you as what you say. Across cultures, people credit individuals they find physically attractive with higher levels of intelligence, persuasiveness, poise, sociability, warmth, power, and employment success than they credit to unattractive individuals (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). Communication researchers call this tendency to make a blanket judgement of a person based on one trait the **halo** (positive) or **horns** (negative) **effect.** As physical attractiveness is variable across cultures, and constantly being redefined, beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

4.1.14 Artifacts

Artifacts are the things we possess that influence how we see ourselves and that we use to express our identity to others. They can include rings and tattoos, but may also include brand names and logos. From clothes to cars, watches, briefcases, purses, and even eyeglasses, what we choose to surround ourselves with communicates something about our sense of self. They may project gender, role or position, class or status, personality, and group membership or affiliation.

4.1.15 Environment

A final way in which we communicate nonverbally is through our **environment**. The *environment* involves the physical aspects of our surroundings. More than the tables and chairs in an office, environment is an important part of the dynamic communication process. The perception of one's environment influences one's reaction to it. For example, Google is famous for its work environment, with spaces created for physical activity and even in-house food service around the clock. The expense is no doubt considerable, but Google's actions speak volumes. The results produced in the environment, designed to facilitate creativity, interaction, and collaboration, are worth the effort.

4.1.16 Cultural Space

Although, the idea of *cultural space* doesn't fit neatly into the category of nonverbal behaviors, many intercultural communication researchers find significance in the idea as it merges *culture*, *environment* and *identity.* The seed originates in the writings of French philosopher and social theorist, Michel Foucault (1970). The argument is that culture is dynamic and redefines itself from one generation to the next so many scholars are now referring to this broad area of research by the metaphor of **cultural space.** *Cultural space* is the social and cultural contexts in which our identities are formed.

One of the earliest *cultural spaces* that humans experience is *home. Home* can be a tremendous source of identification. It often communicates social class and norms, as well as safety and security. *Home* is not the same as the physical location it occupies, but rather the feelings invoked. *Home* can be a specific address, cities, states, regions, and even nations.

A **neighborhood** is an area defined by its own cultural identity. This area can revolve around race and ethnicity, and certain cultural groups can define who gets to live where by dictating the rules by which other groups must live. Historical forces and power relations have led to different settlement patterns of cultural groups in the United States and around the world.

Many people identify strongly with particular regions. **Regionalism** is loyalty to an area that holds cultural meaning. This loyalty can be expressed symbolically by flying regional flags, wearing special clothing, celebrating regional holidays, and participating in other cultural activities. This loyalty can also be expressed through protests or armed conflict.

Social media has added a new dimension to cultural spaces by pushing definitions and boundaries. This notion of fluid cultural space is in contrast with previous notions of space which were rooted in landownership & occupation, along with borders,

colonies, and territories. We will explore this idea more in our social media and popular culture chapter.

Cultural space influences how we think about ourselves and others therefore, changing **cultural space** is not easy to do. **Travel** raises important issues related to changing how we interact and communicate with others and is often associated with transformation of the traveler. **Migration** involves a more permanent kind of change than traveling, and is also an impetus of **cultural space** change.

4.1.17 Wrapping Up

People may not understand your words, but they will certainly interpret your nonverbal communication according to *their* accepted norms. Notice the word *their*. It is *their* perceptions that will count when you are trying to communicate, and it's important to understand that those perceptions will be based on the teachings and experiences of their culture—not yours.

The ideas and theories presented in the previous sections note how we look at the structures of cultures, values, and communication. They also provide a framework for talking about and comparing cultures, but it's always important to remember that cultures are heterogeneous, and constantly changing. One size does not fit all and nonverbal communication is ambiguous even in the best of times.

4.1.18 Key Vocabulary

- nonverbal messages
- mixed messages
- nonverbal communication codes
- kinesics
- facial expressions
- oculesics
- gestures
- posture
- gestures
- emblems
- illustrators
- regulators
- adaptors
- vocalics
- proxemics
- conversation distance
- intimate space
- social space
- personal space
- public space
- territory
- contact vs. noncontact
- monochronic cultures
- polychronic cultures
- halo vs. horn effect
- artifacts
- cultural space
- environment

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Obstacles to Intercultural Competence

5.1: Relationships
5.2: Cultural Biases
5.3: Conflict

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5.1: Relationships

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, readers should:

- Identify the benefits and challenges of intercultural relationships.
- Understand the foundations of intercultural relationships.
- Describe the different types of intercultural relationships.
- Identify cultural differences within the relationship context.
- Describe competent and incompetent relationships.

Establishing relationships with people from cultures different than your own can be challenging. How do you get to know them? Should you treat those relationships differently than same culture relationships? Does society influence these new relationships? Learning new customs and traditions can be fun and exciting, but also force us to identify what we think that we know about ourselves along with our prejudices and fears. This chapter will help you gain a better understanding of what to expect when interacting with people that are culturally different from yourself. We will explore the benefits and challenges of intercultural relationships, discuss the different kinds of intercultural relationships, and encourage you with strategies to build solid intercultural relationships.

We establish and maintain relationships through our communication with each other. Although the term "relationship" is often associated with romance, intercultural relationships can be as varied as the people within them. Colleagues performing a work-related task can develop a friendship. Marrying into a family creates strong familial ties. Eating at the same family-run restaurant each week builds loyalty. Good friends are always treasured.

5.1.1 Benefits of Intercultural Relationships

The benefits of **intercultural relationships** span differences in gender, age, ethnicity, race, class, nationality, religion, and much more. The moment you begin an intercultural relationship, is the moment you begin to learn more about the world. You will start experiencing new foods, listen to new music, learn a new game, practice a new sport, acquire new words or a new dialect, or read new literature that you might never had access to before. In some ways you gain a new "history" as you learn what it means to belong to a new cultural group. Hearing a friend or family member describing their lived experience or stories is often much more compelling or "real" than knowledge gained in school or on television.

The difficulties involved in intercultural relationships may help you acquire new skills. According to Docan-Morgan(2015), the skills we develop in all relationships are exaggerated in intercultural relationships. Our diverse friends and loved ones teach us much about the world that we have yet to explore. Docan-Morgan postulates that our newfound understanding of one culture will likely make it easier to relate and to feel close to people from many different walks of life. In other words, our intercultural relationships result in new insights and new ways of thinking that we can apply to every relationship.

Intercultural relationships also help us rethink stereotypes we might hold. Martin and Nakayama (2014) point out that the differences we perceive with our partners tend to be more noticeable in the early stages of the relationship. Because these differences can seem overwhelming, the challenge is to discover the things both partners and in common and build on those similarities to strengthen the relationship. The suffering that one or both partners have gone through at the hands of prejudice can be addressed, and a healing effect can grow and thrive as relational partners learn that their prejudices have little to do with the thriving relationship being built.

5.1.2 Challenges in Intercultural Relationships

While intercultural relationships can enrich our lives and provide life-changing benefits, they can also present several challenges. In order to build a relationship across cultural boundaries, there has to be **motivation**. Much about this relationship will be different than same culture relationships, and take time to explore. It's much easier to build a relationship where you understand the rules, behaviors and worldviews of your partner. Intercultural relationships are characterized by **differences**. Differences occur in values, perceptions, and communication styles. These differences have been discussed in greater depth in the cultural foundation and verbal chapters, but once commonality is established, and the relationship develops, the differences won't seem to be as insurmountable.

Another challenge is **negative stereotypes**. Stereotypes are powerful, and often take a conscious effort to detect. Pathstone Mental Health (2017) suggests seven important things we can do to reduce stereotyping and discrimination within relationships.

- Know the facts.
- Be aware of your attitudes and behavior.
- Choose your words carefully.

- Educate others.
- Focus on the positive.
- Support people.
- Include everyone.

Anxiety or fear about the possible negative consequences because of our actions or being uncertain how to act towards a person from a different culture is another challenge. Some form of anxiety always exists in the early stages of any relationship, but being worried about looking incompetent or offending someone is more pronounced in intercultural relationships. The level of anxiety may even be higher if people have previous negative experiences.

The fifth challenge is *affirming another person's cultural identity.* We need to recognize that the other person might have different values, beliefs, and behaviors which form both their individual and cultural identities. The principle of **ethnocentrism** encourages a tendency for members of the majority culture to view their own values, beliefs, and behaviors to be the norm and that the minority culture should adapt to them. Lastly, the **need for explanations** is a huge challenge. Intercultural relationships can be more work that intracultural relationships because of the need for explanations. One must explain values, beliefs and behaviors to ourselves, to each other, and to our communities. Every difference, and similarity, must be explored. What does a friendship look like? What are the expectations? What does a romantic relationship look like? Who must approve the relationship? Why would we want to be friends? What taboos exist within the culture? It's not impossible for an intercultural relationship to work out. All it requires is being open-minded, being interested, being respectful, realizing the similarities, avoiding making assumptions, and celebrating the differences. Intercultural relationships have real challenges, but if things work out, they can be amazing.

5.1.3 Foundations of Relationships

Every day you meet and interact with new people while going about your daily life, yet few of these people will make a lasting impression. Have you ever wondered what draws you to these special few? It is not a mystery. The factors include physical attractiveness, similarity, complementarity, proximity, reciprocal liking, and resources (Aron et al., 2008). It's not a secret that many people feel drawn those that they perceive as **physically attractive**, but we also need to remember that the idea of attractiveness is not always the most stunningly beautiful or stunningly handsome person in the area. Attractiveness can also be what is familiar to us. Most of us do find physical beauty attractive to us, but we tend to form long-term romantic relationships with people we judge as similar to ourselves in physical attractiveness (Feingold, 1988; White, 1980).

Undoubtedly you've heard the common saying, "birds of a feather flock together." This is the same for relationships. Scientific evidence suggests that we are attracted to those we perceive as *similar* to ourselves (Miller, 2014). One explanation for this is that people we view as *similar* to ourselves are less likely to cause uncertainty. They seem easier to predict, and we feel more comfortable with them (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). *Similarity* is more than physical attractiveness through, it means sharing personalities, values, and preferences (Markey & Markey, 2007).

Another common saying that you have probably heard is that "opposites attract." **Complementarity** has been debated for a long time, and so far the research is inconclusive. Based on the 1950s research of sociologist Robert Winch, we would say that we are naturally attracted to people who are different from ourselves, and therefore, somewhat exciting (www.personalitypage.com). It was believed to be a natural quest for completion. Unfortunately, more current research from Markey & Markey (2007) found the opposite. What is not in question is when it comes to work colleagues and friends. On the job or with friends, we are not particularly interested in dealing with people who are unlike ourselves. Generally, we are most interested in dealing with people who are like ourselves and don't display a lot of patience or motivation for dealing with our opposites (Ickes, 1999).

The simple fact of **proximity**, or often being around each other, exerts far more impact on relationships than generally acknowledged. The idea is that you are more likely to feel attracted to people with whom you have frequent contact with and are less attracted to those with whom you rarely interact. Another often overlooked determinant of attraction is *reciprocal liking* (Aron et al., 2008). The idea is quite simple, we tend to be attracted to people who are attracted to us. Studies examining stories about "falling in love" have found that reciprocal liking is the most commonly mentioned factor leading to love (Riela, Rodriguez, Aron, Xu, and Acevedo, 2010). mAnd lastly, the final attraction foundation is called **resources**. Resources include such qualities as sense of humor, intelligence, kindness, supportiveness, and more (Felmlee et al., 2010). **Social exchange theory** proposed that you will feel drawn to people that you see as offering benefits (things that you want) with few associated costs (things demanded from you in return) (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). In other words, you're attracted to people who can give you what you want and who offer better rewards than others.

5.1.4 Common Types of Relationships

In this era of globalization, people are traveling across geographical, national, and cultural boundaries as never before. For many, establishing relationships with persons different from ourselves can be challenging and rewarding. Although each intercultural relationship will differ based on the cultures and people involved, the following brief exploration of relationship types will begin to help you understand the plethora of intercultural relationships.

5.1.5 Friendship

Friendship is a unique and important type of interpersonal relationship that constitutes a significant portion of a person's social life from early childhood all the way through to late adulthood (Rawlins, 1992). Friendship is distinguished from other types of relationships by its "voluntary" nature. In other words, friendship occurs when individuals are relatively free from obligatory ties, duties, and other expectations (Fischer (1975). One can begin or end a friendship as desired.

These different notions about friendship are a function of variations in values as well as individualism and collectivism. People who tend to be individualistic often view friendship as a voluntary decision that is more spontaneous and focused on individual goals that might be gained by befriending a particular person. Such goals might include practicing language skills or learning to cook culinary specialties. On the other hand, collectivists may have more obligatory views of friendship. They may see it as a long-term obligation that involves mutual gain such as help with gaining a visa or somewhere to stay during vacations (Wahl & Scholl, 2014).

The idea of what constitutes a friendship certainly varies from culture to culture. In the United States, the term "friend" is a fairly broad term that applies to many different kinds of relationships. In Eastern European countries, for example, the term "friend" is used in a much more narrow context. What many cultures in the world consider a "friend," an American would consider a "close friend" (Martin & Nakayama, 2014). Americans often form relationships quickly, and can come across as informal, forward, intrusive, and superficial (Triandis, 1995). Asian cultures place more emphasis on indirect communication patterns and more stress on maintaining social relationships, sincerity and spirituality (Barnlund, 1989; Yum, 1988).

Intercultural friendship can be difficult to initiate, develop, and maintain, but that is not to say that different cultures cannot have similar views on friendship. Various cultures can value the same things, such as honesty and trustworthiness, but simply prioritize them differently (Barnlund, 1989). Researchers have found a wide range of important friendship variables such as values, interest, personality traits, network patterns, communication styles, cultural knowledge, relational competence, and intergroup attitudes that impact intercultural friendship formation (Aberson, Shoemaker & Tomolillo, 2004; Collier & Mahoney, 1996; Gareis, 1995; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1979; Mcdermott, 1992; Olanrian, 1996; Yamaguchi & Wiseman, 2003; Zimmermann, 1995).

Intriguing research from Sias et al. (2008) indicate that cultural differences can enhance, rather than hinder, friendship development. Cultural differences enhanced friendship development because the participants found those differences interesting and exciting. Those who overcame the challenges of language differences were able to develop rich friendships often with a unique vocabulary that included words created from a mixture of both languages. An example of this could be "Spanglish" which is a mixture of Spanish and English or "Chinglish" which is a mixture of Chinese and English. This idiosyncratic language seemed to strengthen the bond between the friends (Sias et al., 2008; Casmir, 1999; Imahori & Cupach, 2005).

There are also similarities and differences between how **romantic relationships** are perceived in different cultures. When two various cultures come together, there may be significant challenges they have to face, but it is important to remember that like any relationship, intercultural romantic relationships are all different. In general, romantic relationships are "voluntary," and most cultures stress the importance of openness, mutual involvement, shared nonverbal meanings, and relationship assessment (Martin & Nakayama, 2014). Individualism and collectivism play a role in romantic relationships as well. In individualistic cultures such as the United States, togetherness is important as long as it doesn't interfere too much with one's individual autonomy. Physical attraction, passion, and love are often initiators of romantic relationships in individualistic cultures. Being open, talking things out, and retaining a sense of self are maintenance strategies.

Collectivistic cultures often value acceptance and "fitting in" as the most important values for romantic partners. Family approval can make or break a romantic relationship. Family members are expected to align with, and support, the dominant values, beliefs, and behavioral expectations of the family hierarchy. Individual happiness is important, but thought only to be fully realized within the family system. Intercultural marriages and couplings are growing at an increasing rate. What once might have seemed unusual or exotic is becoming more accepted and common place. Finding an intercultural love relationship might be getting easier, but negotiating through the

unique challenges inherent to these relationships can still be difficult.

Romano (2008) found **four distinct conflict styles** that reflect how intercultural couples negotiate their way through the differences. The **submission style** is the most common and involves one partner abdicating power to the other partner's culture or cultural preferences. Sometimes the submission is only seen as a display for the public, whereas the relationship may be more balance in private. Even though it is the most popular style, this approach rarely works because submission often involves denying certain aspect's of one's own culture. Although the **compromise style** might seem to be the most desirable, it really means that both people must sacrifice some aspect of their life. Each partner gives up some culturally bound habit or value to accommodate the other. Game theorists would call this a lose-lose or no-win situation.

Some couples will try the **obliteration style**. In this case, both partners try to erase or obliterate their original cultures, and create a new "culture" with new beliefs, values, and behaviors. This can be extremely difficult and create problems with other family members, but more likely if the couple lives in country that is "home" to neither of them. The ideal solution is the **consensus style**. As it is based on negotiation and mutual agreement, neither person has to assume that they must abandon their own culture. This style is related to compromise because of the give-and-take, but it is not a trade-off. Game theorists call this a win-win proposition.

In a survey on intercultural marriages (Prokopchak, 1994), couples were asked to respond about the positives and negatives of intercultural marriage. This survey resulted in four cautions to be considered during intercultural conflict. First, *know each other's culture.* Don't think that all families and all cultures operate in a certain way. Second, *be accountable.* There is a tendency not to listen to others. Weigh their concerns. Third, *know what both cultures value.* There is a tendency to value things, but people should be of primary concern. And last, *identify adaptation versus core value changes.* Be aware of the differences between behavior modification or adaptation and core value changes.

5.1.6 Gay & Lesbian Relationships

There has been much more research done on heterosexual or cisgender intercultural friendships and romantic relationships than gay or same-sex intercultural relationships. Although there are many similarities between gay and cisgender relationships, Martin and Nakayama (2014) believe that such relationships differ in at least four areas. These areas include the importance of close friendships, conflict management, intimacy, and the role of sexuality. Close relationships and friendships might be more important to gays and lesbians who often rely on these ties in the face of social stigma, family ostracism, and discrimination. Researchers Gottman and Levenson (2004) have found some positive differences in the area of conflict management for gay and lesbian couples. Gay relationships often start with sexual attraction, but often persist after sexual involvement has ceased (Martin & Nakayama, 2014).

Although homosexuality has existed throughout human history, cultures can have vast differences in how they support, accept, and categorize attraction and sexual relations between persons of the same gender. **Two-Spirit,** a pre-contact pan-Indian term, has been adopted by some modern indigenous North Americans to describe gender-variant individuals in their communities (Medicine, 2002; Enos, 2017). Not all tribes or nations have rigid gender roles, but among those that do, some consider there to be at least four genders: feminine woman, masculine woman, feminine man, and masculine man (Estrada, 2010). Many East and Southeast Asian languages, including Chinese, do not contain grammatical gender, and also have histories of cultural tolerance.

5.1.7 Communicating in Intercultural Relationships

Intercultural relationships and intracultural or same culture relationships may hold many similarities, but also many differences. All relationships take time to develop, but it is especially important to give intercultural relationships time to develop. As previously discussed, there are many challenges within intercultural relationships that take time to explain, negotiate, and work through. We need to be **involved** through interaction and shared friendship networks. There are often significant events, or **turning points**, that move the relationship forward or backward. Perceived similarities can help relationships to develop whereas perceived differences can lead to roadblocks or failure to thrive.

Relationships are hard work, and require constant upkeep to combat the challenges that threaten them. It's no exaggeration to say that we develop, and maintain relationships through communication. What you say and what you do becomes part of the relationship. Incorrect interpretations of messages can lead to misunderstanding, uncertainty, frustration, and conflict, but the potential rewards include gaining new cultural knowledge, broadening one's worldview, and breaking stereotypes (Sias et al., 2008).

People who have developed good communication skills are often described as having **communication competence.** Communicating effectively, along with writing and critical thinking, is often considered one of the key skills of gaining a college education. A previous chapter has already defined

communication, and to be competent at something means that you are good at it. To have **communication competence** means that "we have knowledge of effective and appropriate communication patterns and the ability to use and adapt that knowledge in various contexts" (Cooley & Roach, 1984). Researcher Owen Hargie (2011) proposed that there were four levels of competence based on competence and incompetent communication as well as conscious or unconscious communication.

Unconscious incompetence is the "be yourself" approach. This person may not have a strong knowledge of cultural differences and does not see any need to accommodate differences in communication styles or culture. They may not even be aware they are communicating in an incompetent manner. Once people learn more about culture and communication, they may become **conscious incompetent.** This is where they have the vocabulary to identify the concepts, and know what they should be doing, but realize they are not communicating as well as they could. Many of us have experiences the feeling that something isn't quite right, yet we can't quite figure out what went wrong. As communication skills increase, and the focus is on cultural concepts and communication styles, you become a **conscious competent** communicator. You know that you are communicating well in the moment, and you can add this memory to your growing bank of successful intercultural interactions. Reaching this level is important, but not the pinnacle of competent communication.

Unconscious competence is the level to achieve. Unconscious competence means that you can communicate successfully without straining to be competent. At this point all the knowledge and previous experiences have been put into practice, and you rarely have to intently focus on your intercultural interactions because it has become second nature. You have developed the skills needed to be competent.

The National Communication Association (NCA) has developed guidelines for what it means to be a competent communicator (1999). They include:

1. State ideas clearly.
2. Communicate ethically.
3. Recognize when it is appropriate to communicate.
4. Identify their communication goals.
5. Select the most appropriate and effective medium for communicating.
6. Demonstrate credibility.
7. Identify and manage misunderstandings.
8. Manage conflict.
9. Be open-minded about another's point of view.
10. Listen attentively.

Communication competence is an important component in developing positive intercultural relationships, but it is also important to consider the societies in which these relationships develop. **Contact hypothesis** or **Intergroup Contact Theory** should be applied to intercultural communication. The **contact hypothesis** (Allport, 1954) suggests that under appropriate conditions intergroup contact will lessen stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination leading to better intergroup contact. Although the complexities of **contact hypothesis** are still being heavily researched today, with new focus on electronic communication, the general idea is that intercultural relationships occur when the political and societal conditions of the communication encounter promote friendly interaction. When people meet and interact in a cooperative environment, enjoy equal status, and share common goals, all of humanity wins.

5.1.8 Key Vocabulary

- intercultural relationships
- motivation
- difference
- negative stereotypes
- anxiety
- ethnocentrism
- need for explanations
- similarity
- complementarity
- physically attractive
- proximity
- resources
- Social Exchange Theory
- friendship
- romantic relationships
- collectivist
- conflict styles
- submission
- compromise
- obliteration
- consensus
- two-spirit
- turning point
- unconscious incompetence
- conscious competence
- conscious incompetence
- unconscious competence
- Contact Hypothesis
- Intergroup Contact Theory

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5.2: Cultural Biases

Learning Objectives

1. Define racial prejudice.
2. Explain the effect privilege and ethnocentrism affects intercultural competence.

We have already discussed race in chapter three. In this chapter we will discuss three other distinct concepts of race, as well as other cultural biases existing in today's world.

"When you begin to understand the biology of human variation, you have to ask yourself if race is a good way to describe that."–Janis Hutchinson, Biological Anthropologist

Figure **5.2.1**: Three Indian woman performing a native dance. By pavan gupta

Related to race are racial prejudice, racial discrimination, and racism. **Racial prejudice** refers to **the practice of holding false or negative beliefs of one racial group for the purpose of making another racial group (usually one's own) appear superior or normative. Racial discrimination is the outward manifestation of racial prejudice: it is when people act upon their negative beliefs about other races when communicating or setting policy.** Note, it is possible to be prejudiced without acting upon those beliefs and that all races can discriminate against other races. The final concept, racism, combines racial prejudice with social power. Racism is institutional, rather than individual, meaning it **occurs in large institutional contexts such as the representations of particular groups within media or the fact that racial minorities do not have equal access to educational or legal opportunities**(Orbe and Harris 10). Racism often involves the unequal accessibility to resources and power.

Two other concepts that are often confused with race are ethnicity and nationality. **Ethnicity** refers to **a person's or people's heritage and history, and involves shared cultural traditions and beliefs.** A person may identify as Asian-American racially while their ethnicity is Chinese. **Nationality** refers to **a people's nation-state of residence or where they hold citizenship.** Most often nationality is derived from the country where one was born, but on occasion people give up their citizenship by birth and migrate to a new country where they claim national identity. For example, an individual could have been born and raised in another country but once they migrate to the United States and have American citizenship, their nationality becomes American.

Perhaps you may have noticed the theme of inequality as we have discussed topics like "unequal access to resources and benefits," racial discrimination, and racism. You may have also thought, "oh, my, this is going to be a touchy chapter to read and discuss in class" or "this is interesting and relevant, but I feel uncomfortable talking about this as I don't want to offend anyone." These are very common and understandable reactions and ones we hear when we teach this subject matter. Hopefully, your instructor has set up a safe, open, and respectful classroom environment to facilitate such discussions. The fact that you are self-reflective of your feelings and how to express them to others is a great start! We too want you to be able to discuss this material both in and out of your class in a productive and self-reflective manner. To facilitate that goal we have included some additional concepts— privilege, ethnocentrism, whiteness, and political correctness—that are useful when considering your own cultural identity, your place in society, and your communication with others.

5.2.1 Privilege

Hopefully, you have been thinking about your own cultural identity as you have been reading this chapter. If so, then you have been thinking about labels that define you culturally. Maybe you have defined yourself as female, Latina, and heterosexual. Or maybe you have labeled yourself as gay, white, working-class, and male. When we give ourselves labels such as these, often we ask ourselves, "Where do I fit in?" This is a good question to ask and demonstrates a recognition of the fact that you belong to more than one culture and that your cultures intersect in various ways. The most significant manifestation of these intersections is power—-the ability to influence others and control our lives. From the statistics given earlier in the chapter and from your own experiences, you should realize that some groups have more power than others. These people are what we refer to as the dominant group: white, male, Christian, middle-class, able-bodied, educated, and heterosexual. People whose cultural identities do not conform to this model are the nondominant groups and have less sociopolitical and economic power.

Peggy McIntosh uses the term **privilege** to refer to ***the power of dominant groups***. She defines privilege as an invisible knapsack of advantages that some people carry around. They are

invisible because they are often not recognized, seen as normative (i.e., “that’s just the way things are”), seen as universal (i.e., “everyone has them”), or used unconsciously. Below is a list of some of the privileges McIntosh identifies. Can you think of others?

1. I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area that I can afford and in which I would want to live.
3. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
4. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
5. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
6. When I am told about our national heritage or about “civilization,” I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
7. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
8. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.
9. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods that fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser’s shop and find someone who can deal with my hair.
10. Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
11. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
12. I can swear, or dress in second-hand clothes, or not answer letters without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
13. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
14. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
15. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
16. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color, who constitute the world’s majority, without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
17. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.
18. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to “the person in charge” I will be facing a person of my race.
19. If a traffic cop pulls me over, or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven’t been singled out because of my race.
20. I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children’s magazines featuring people of my race.
21. I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in rather than isolated, out of place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared.
22. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having coworkers on the job suspect that I got it because of race.
23. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
24. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help my race will not work against me.
25. If my day, week, or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones.
26. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in “flesh” color that more or less match my skin.

McIntosh admits, “My perception is that colleges and universities are the main institutions that are raising awareness of the relationship between privilege and oppression, but that this awareness is needed throughout all public and private sectors of the United States; the ability to see privilege should be in the minds of all citizens” (195). As you think about privilege and the resulting advantages that some groups have over others, you should also keep in mind two facts. One, privilege is a relative concept that varies according to context. In some situations we may be more privileged than others, and in order to access some of that privilege one may decide to highlight or conceal parts of their identity. For example, unless a person tells you, you have no way of knowing their sexual orientation. Thus, a gay man might decide to “pass” as straight at a family reunion to avoid conflict from a heterosexist family. The fact that he can choose pass as an Asian man and cannot make the choice to pass as Latino is another example of privilege. Two, we may have aspects of our identities that are simultaneously advantaged and disadvantaged. The gay, white, working-class, male above is advantaged by the fact that he has light skin and is male, and is disadvantaged by the fact that he is gay and working-class.

***Think About It . . .* Privilege**

Another example is from Nathan Pyle, a BuzzFeed staff member who wrote an article entitled, 10 Privileges I Have Complained About.

Read Nathan's article and watch this short video on teaching privilege in the classroom. Do you have certain privileges? Are there some you lack?

5.2.2 Ethnocentrism

One of the first steps to communicating sensitively and productively about cultural identity is to be able to name and recognize one's identity and the relative privilege that it affords. Similarly important, is a recognition that one's cultural standpoint is not everyone's standpoint. Our views of the world, what we consider right and wrong, normal or weird, are largely influenced by our cultural position or standpoint: the intersections of all aspects of our identity. One common mistake that people from all cultures are guilty of is **ethnocentrism—-placing one's own culture and the corresponding beliefs, values, and behaviors in the center; in a position where it is seen as normal and right, and evaluating all other cultural systems against it.**

Ethnocentrism shows up in small and large ways: the WWII Nazi's elevation of the Aryan race and the corresponding killing of Jews, Gypsies, gays and lesbians, and other non Aryan groups is one of the most horrific ethnocentric acts in history. However, ethnocentrism shows up in small and seemingly unconscious ways as well. In American culture, if you decided to serve dog meat as appetizers at your cocktail party you would probable disgust your guests and the police might even arrest you because the consumption of dog meat is not culturally acceptable. However, in China "it is neither rare nor unusual" to consume dog meat (Wingfield-Hayes). In the Czech Republic, the traditional Christmas dinner is carp and potato salad. Imagine how your family might react if you told them you were serving carp and potato salad for Christmas. In the Czech Republic, it is a beautiful tradition, but in America, it might not receive a warm welcome. Our cultural background influences every aspect of our lives from the food we consume to the classroom. Ethnocentrism is likely to show up in Literature classes as well. Cultural bias dictates which "great works" students are going to read and study in the classroom. More often than not, these works represent the given culture (i.e., reading French authors in France and Korean authors in Korea). This ethnocentric bias has received some challenge in United States' schools as teachers make efforts to create a multicultural classroom by incorporating books, short stories, and traditions from non-dominant groups.

In the field of geography there has been an ongoing debate about the use of a Mercater map versus a Peter's Projection map. The arguments reveal cultural biases toward the Northern, industrialized nations.

5.2.2.1 Whiteness

If you are White, how would you describe your culture? When we ask this question to our students we find that White students are often uncomfortable with the question, feel guilty about self-identifying as White, or claim that White people do not have a culture. Gordon Alley-Young says, "The invisibility of whiteness and white privilege for many people is what makes it difficult to name and thus to disrupt" (312). These sentiments have lead an increasing amount of scholars in a variety of disciplines such as Sociology, Women's Studies, Anthropology, English, as well as Communication to study the concept of Whiteness. Orbe and Harris explain why exploring this concept is important by explaining that "[i]t helps us all view communication as a racialized process [which] sharpens our awareness of how racial categorization is used to reinforce old hierarchies in which some races are more superior than others [and that] whiteness studies also assign each person a role in race relations" (89).

> *View communication as a racialized process—meaning that our communication is structured by larger societal and racial dynamics. Second, understanding Whiteness sharpens our awareness of how racial categorization is used to reinforce old hierarchies in which some races are more superior than others. This helps us recognize how Whiteness can be used to signify dominance, privilege, and advantage in the United States. And, third, through studying and recognizing the effects of Whiteness, each person plays a role in race relations. White people can no longer sit on the sidelines and claim "it's a black problem" when discussing interracial conflict. (82-83)*

Overall, it removes the White race from the often-unidentified "normative" group and provides a context for studying, talking about, and hopefully improving race relations.

The above discussion about privilege and Whiteness is not meant to suggest that those people with sociopolitical privilege should feel ashamed or guilty. This is often a trap that people fall into and it can shut down important thinking and conversations about intercultural communication. We want everyone to realize that they have a racial identity and thus are an important part of improving race relations. Race relations is not just a subject that concerns minorities—it concerns

everyone as we all play a part and benefit whether consciously or unconsciously.

5.2.3 Political Correctness

Another claim or label that may be used to discount such difficult discussions is Political Correctness, or "PC" as it has been dubbed in the popular press. Opponents of multiculturalism and diversity studies try and dismiss such topics as "that's just PC." Luckily, some of the heated debate about PC have quieted in recent years but the history lingers. In short, political correctness refers to "the elimination of speech that often works to exclude, oppress, demean, or harass certain groups" (Orbe and Harris 58, Remar). The debate largely focused around competing interpretations of the First Amendment right to free speech and the Fourteenth Amendment's right to equal access to education. No matter what your position on this issue, we want to simply recognize two facts. One, that much of the PC debate and fury was largely misrepresented and hyped in the mainstream media by the use of extreme examples and a slippery-slope argument. Rush Limbaugh, for example, became famous for claiming that an awareness and sensitivity of language choice would lead to the "thought Police" or "PC police." Two, that words and labels have great power to create perceptions, realities and identities. Toward that aim, we will discuss the power of language in greater detail in the following section.

5.2.4 Summary

Culture: belief systems, values, and behaviors that support a particular ideology or social arrangement.

Culture guides language use, appropriate forms of dress, and views of the world.

The concept is broad and encompasses many areas of our lives such as the role of the family, individual, educational systems, employment, and gender.

Racial prejudice refers to the practice of holding false or negative beliefs of one racial group for the purpose of making another racial group (usually one's own) appear superior or normative.

Racial discrimination is the outward manifestation of racial prejudice: it is when people act upon their negative beliefs about other races when
communicating or setting policy.

Racism, combines racial prejudice with social power. It is institutional, rather than individual, meaning it occurs in large institutional contexts such as the representations of particular groups within media or the fact that racial minorities do not have equal access to educational or legal opportunities. It often involves the unequal accessibility to resources and power.

5.2.5 Understanding Race

Race fall into two camps: a biological versus a sociopolitical construction:

Biological	*Sociopolitical*
"pure" races existed and could be distinguished by such physical features as eye color and shape, skin color, and hair.	it is not a person's DNA that places them into a particular racial grouping, but all of the other factors that create social relations—politics, geography, or migration.
traced back to genetic differences	what it means to be of a particular race
no scientific connection with racial identity and cultural traits or behaviors	meanings of race have changed across time and space.

- **Ethnicity** refers to a person's or people's heritage and history, and involves shared cultural traditions and beliefs.
- **Nationality** refers to a person's nation-state of residence or where he/she holds citizenship.
- **Gender** is part of culture in that every society has particular gender roles and expectations for males and females.
- **Sexual orientation** refers to a person's preference for sexual or romantic relationships; one may prefer a partner of the same sex, the opposite sex, or both.
- **Power** is the ability to influence others and control our lives.
- The **dominant group** in the US is white, male, Christian, middle-class, able-bodied, educated, and heterosexual. Those who fall into this category are deemed privilege based on their power
- **Nondominant groups** are people who do not conform or fit into the dominant group and have less sociopolitical and economic power.
- **Ethnocentrism**—placing one's own culture and the corresponding beliefs, values, and behaviors in the center; in a position where it is seen as normal and right, and evaluating all other cultural systems against it.

Minority Identity Development	Majority Identity Development	Bi- or Multiracial Identity Development
Stage 1: Unexamined Identity.	Stage 1: Unexamined Identity	Stage 1: Personal Identity
Stage 2: Conformity	Stage 2: Acceptance.	Stage 2: Group Categorization
Stage 3: Resistance and Separation.	Stage 3: Resistance	Stage 3: Enmeshment/Denial
Stage 4: Integration	Stage 4: Redefinition	Stage 4: Appreciation
	Stage 5: Integration	Stage 5: Integration.

- **High Context**: the meaning of the communication is in the people, or more specifically, the relationship between the people as opposed to just the words.
- **Low Context**: When we have to rely on the translation of the words to decipher a person's meaning
- **Collectivist**: When a person or culture places the needs and interests of the group above individual desires or motivations.
- **Individualistic**: The self or one's own personal goals motivate these cultures. Each person is viewed as responsible for his or her own success or failure in life.

5.2.5.1 KEY TERMS

- Afrocentricity
- Critical race theory
- Collectivism/Individualism
- Communication Styles
- Culture
- Ethnicity
- Ethnocentrism
- Gender
- High and low context
- Identity
- Popular Culture
- Privilege
- Race
- Representation
- Symbolic Annihilation
- Whiteness

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5.3: Conflict

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, readers should:

- Identify and describe the five types of conflict.
- Identify and describe the style of conflict present in a given situation.
- Understand how and why individuals approach conflict in various ways.
- Understand how and why individuals manage conflict in various ways and be able to suggest more productive ways for handling intercultural conflict.
- Explain the four-skill approach to managing intercultural conflict.

Conflict is a part of all human relationships (Canary, 2003). Almost any issue can spark conflict—*money, time, religion, politics, culture*—and almost anyone can get into a conflict. Conflicts are happening all around the world at the personal, societal, political, and international levels. Conflict is not simple and it's not just a matter of disagreement. According to Wilmot & Hocker (2010), "**conflict** is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scare resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals. (p. 11)" There are several aspects of conflict that we must consider when pondering this definition and its application to intercultural communication.

5.3.1 Expressed Struggle

Conflict is a communication process that is expressed verbally and nonverbally. Wilmot & Hocker assert that communication creates conflict, communication reflects conflict, and communication is the vehicle for the management of conflict (Wilmot & Hocker, 1998). Often, conflict is easily identified because one party openly and verbally disagrees with the other, but intrapersonal, or internal conflict, may exist for some time before being expressed. An example could be family members avoiding each other because both think, "I don't want to see them for awhile because of what they did." The **expression** of the struggle is often activated by a triggering event which brings the conflict to everyone's attention. In the case of family members, a triggering event could be going on vacation instead of attending a golden wedding anniversary party or other significant life event.

5.3.2 Interdependent

Parties engaged in **expressed struggle** do so because they are **interdependent**. "A person who is not dependent upon another —that is, who has no special interest in what the other does— has no conflict with that other person" (Braiker & Kelley, 1979). In other words, each parties' choices effect the other because conflict is a mutual activity. Each decision impacts the other.

Consider the teenager who chooses to wear an obnoxious or offensive t-shirt before catching the bus. People with no connections to the teen and notice the t-shirt are unlikely to engage in conflict. They have never seen the teen before, and probably won't again. The ill-advised decision to wear the t-shirt does not impact them, therefore the reason to engage in conflict does not exist.

The same scenario involving a teen and their parents would probably turn out differently. Because parents and teens are interdependent, the ill-advised decision to wear an offensive t-shirt could quickly escalate into a power struggle over individual autonomy that leads to harsh words and hurt feelings.

5.3.3 Perception

Parties in conflict have perceptions about their own position and the position of others. Each party may also have a different perception of any given situation. We can anticipate having such differences due to a number of factors that create **perceptual filters** or **cultural frames** that influence our responses to the situation. Such influences can be things like culture, race & ethnicity; gender & sexuality; knowledge; impressions of the messenger; and previous experience. These factors and more conspire to form the **perceptual filters** through which we experience conflict.

5.3.4 Clashes in Goals, Resources, and Behaviors

Conflict arises from differences. It occurs whenever parties disagree over their values, motivations, ideas, or desires. The perception might be that goals are mutually exclusive, or there's not enough resources to go around, or one party is sabotaging another. When conflict triggers strong feelings, a deep need is typically at the core of the problem. When the legitimacy of the conflicting needs is recognized, it opens pathways to problem-solving.

5.3.5 Conflict Types

Conflict can be difficult to analyze because it occurs in so many different settings. Knowing the various types of conflict that occur in interpersonal relationships helps us to identify appropriate strategies for managing conflict. Mark Cole (1996) states that there are five types of interpersonal conflict: affective, interest, value, cognitive, and goal.

- **Affective** conflict occurs when people become aware that their feelings and emotions are incompatible. For example, if a romantic couple wants to go out to eat, but one of the partners is a vegetarian while the other is on the Paleo diet, what do they do? The food choices that they have committed to may impact their feelings for each other causing them to question a future together. If the same romantic couple marries and begins to raise children, what will their diet consist of? Do they follow the Paleo diet or the vegetarian one? **Conflict of interest** arises when people disagree about a plan of action or when they have incompatible preferences for a course of action. A difference in ideologies or values between relational partners is called **value conflict.** Our romantic partners eating preferences may be the result of strongly held religious or political views. Remember the old saying, "Never talk about religion and politics." Many people engage in **value conflict** about religion and politics.
- **Cognitive conflict** is when people become aware that their thought processes or perceptions are in conflict. Our romantic partners may disagree about the meaning of a wink from a car salesman as they shopped for a new car. One of the partners believes that the wink was friendly and meant to build a relationship with the couple, but the other partner saw the wink as a sign that the couple would get a better deal if they looked seriously at a specific car.
- **Goal conflict** occurs when people disagree about a preferred outcome or end state. Our car-shopping romantic partners need transportation. For one, the cost of a new car reinforces the choice made to continue using public transportation to save the money not spent for a house. For the other, buying a new car means gaining access to the suburbs where they can afford to buy a new house now.

Rarely do the types of conflict stand alone. Most often, several types of conflict are found intertwined within each other and within the context itself. The actual situation in which the conflict happens can occur on the personal level, the societal level, and even the international level. How we choose to manage the conflict may depend on the types of conflict, the contexts that they occur within, and the particular situation.

5.3.6 Characteristics of Intercultural Conflict

Intercultural conflicts are often characterized by more ambiguity, language issues, and the clash of conflict styles than same culture conflict. Intercultural conflict characteristics rest on the principles discussed in greater depth in the foundation chapters. These principles stressed that culture is dynamic and heterogeneous, but learned. Values are manifest in beliefs and behaviors, which lead to the **worldviews** that guide our perception and navigation through life. Michelle LeBaron (2003) states that "cultures affect the ways we name, frame, blame, and attempt to tame conflicts (p. 3)."

Ambiguity, or the confusion about how to handle or define the conflict, is often present in intercultural conflict because of the multi-layered and heterogeneous nature of culture. What appears on the surface of the conflict may mask what is more deeply hidden below. Verbally indirect, high context cultures, may be reluctant to use words to explore issues of extreme importance that verbally direct, and low context cultures need to access the symbolic levels that are largely outside of their awareness. Yet, knowing the general norms of a group, does not predict the behavior of a specific member of a group. Dimensions of context, and individual differences can be crucial to understanding.

Language issues can also add to the confusion—or clarity—as we try to **name, frame, blame**, and tame the conflict. Not knowing each other's languages very well, could make conflict resolution difficult, and remaining silent could also provide a needed "cooling off" period with time to think. The Western approach to conflict resolution often means labeling and analyzing the smaller components parts of an issue (**name, frame, blame**), before a resolution (**tame**) can be proposed. The Eastern approach to conflict resolution often means reinforcing all aspects of the relationship (**tame**), before ever discussing the issue (**name, frame, blame**)–if at all. In the Eastern approach, language is more of a means of creating and maintaining identity than solving a problem.

5.3.7 Intercultural Conflict Management

Culture is always a factor in conflict, though it rarely causes it alone. When differences surface between people, organizations, and nations, culture is always present, shaping perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes. Attitudes and behaviors shared with dominant or national cultures often seem to be *normal*, *natural*, or *the way things are done*. Our cultural background, and how we were raised, largely determines how we deal with conflict.

The term **facework** refers to the communication strategies that people "use to establish, sustain, or restore a preferred social identity to others during interaction" (Samp, 2015, p. ?). Goffman (1959) claims that everyone is concerned about how others perceive them. To lose **face** is to publicly suffer a diminished self-image, and saving **face** is to be liked, appreciated, and approved by others. Brown & Levinson (1987) use the concept of face to explain politeness, and to them politeness is universal, resulting from people's face needs.

Facework varies from culture to culture and influences conflict styles. For example, people from individualistic cultures tend to

be more concerned with saving their own face rather than anyone else's face. This results in a tendency to use more direct conflict management styles. In contrast, people from collectivistic cultures tend to be more concerned with preserving group harmony and saving the other person's **face** during conflict. Making use of a less direct conversation style to protect the other or make them look good is considered the best way to manage **facework**.

Conflict Face-Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey, 2004) is based a number of assumptions about the extent to which **face** negotiated within a culture and what existing value patterns shape culture members' preferences for the process of negotiating face in conflict situations. The **Conflict Face-Negotiation Theory** is not only influenced by the individual and culture, but also the relationship and the situation of the people experiencing the conflict.

5.3.8 Two Approaches to Conflict

Ways of **naming** and **framing** vary across cultural boundaries. People generally deal with conflict in the way that they learned while growing up. For those accustomed to a calm and rational discussion, screaming and yelling may seem to be a dangerous conflict. Yet, conflicts are subject to different interpretations, based on cultural preference, context, and **facework** ideals.

- **Direct Approaches** is favored by cultures that think conflict is a good thing, and that conflict should be approached **directly,** because working through conflict results in more solid and stronger relationships. This approach emphasizes using precise language, and articulating issues carefully. The best solution is based on solving for set of criteria that has been agreed upon by both parties beforehand.
- **Indirect Approaches** on the other hand are favored by cultures that view conflict as destructive for relationships and prefer to deal with conflict **indirectly.** These cultures think that when people disagree, they should adapt to the consensus of the group rather that engage in conflict. Confrontations are seen as destructive and ineffective. Silence and avoidance are viewed as effective tools to manage conflict. Intermediaries or mediators are used when conflict negotiation is unavoidable, and people who undermine group harmony may face sanctions or ostracism.
- **Emotionally Expressive** people or cultures are those who value intense displays of emotion during disagreement. Outward displays of emotion are seen as indicating that one really cares and is committed to resolving the conflict. It is thought that it is better to show emotion through expressive nonverbal behavior and words than to keep feelings inside and hidden from the world. Trust is gained through the sharing of emotions, and that sharing is necessary for credibility.
- **Emotionally Restrained** People or cultures are those who think that disagreements are best discussed in an emotionally calm manner. Emotions are controlled through "internalization" and few, if any, verbal or nonverbal expressions will be displayed. A sensitivity to hurting feelings or protecting the **face** or honor of the other is paramount. Trust is earned through what is seen as emotional maturity, and that maturity is necessary to appear credible.

5.3.9 Conflict Styles

Miscommunication and misunderstanding between people within the same culture can feel overwhelming enough, but when this occurs with people of another culture or co-culture, we may feel a serious sense of stress. Frequently, all of the good intentions and patience we are able to use during lower-stress encounters can be forgotten, and sometimes we may find that our behavior can surprise even ourselves. Because of this, intercultural conflict experts have developed conflict style inventories that help us to understand our own personal tendencies toward dealing with conflict, and the tendencies others may have.

The **Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory** or **ICS** (Hammer, 2005), measures people's approaches to conflict along two different continuums: direct/indirect and expressive/restrained. Different individuals, but also people of different national cultures, approach conflict in different ways.

The **discussion style** combines *direct* and emotionally restrained dimensions. As it is a verbally direct approach, people who use this style are comfortable expressing disagreements. User perceived strengths of this approach are that it confronts problems, explores arguments, and maintains a calm atmosphere during the conflict. The weaknesses perceived by others is that it is difficult to read "read between the lines," it appears logical but unfeeling, and it can be uncomfortable with emotional arguments. **Discussion style** can often be found in Northern Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and various co-cultures in the United States.

The **engagement style** emphasizes a *verbally direct* and *emotionally expressive* approach to dealing with conflict. This style views intense verbal and nonverbal expressions of emotion as demonstrating a willingness to resolve the conflict. User perceived strengths to this approach are that it provides detailed explanations, instructions, and information. This style expresses opinions and shows feelings. The weaknesses perceived by others are the lack of concern with the views and feelings of others along with the potential for dominatingly rude behavior.

Individual viewpoints are not separated from emotion. **Engagement style** is often used in Mediterranean Europe, Russia, Israel, Latin America, and various co-cultures in the United States.

The **accommodating style** combines the *indirect* and *emotionally restrained* approaches. People who use this approach may send ambiguous message because they believe that by doing so, the conflict will not get out of control. Silence and avoidance are also considered worthy tools. User perceived strengths to this approach are sensitivity to feelings of the other party, control of emotional outburst, and consideration to alternative meaning of ambiguous messages. Weaknesses as perceived by others are difficulty in voicing your own opinion, appearing to be uncommitted or dishonest, and difficulty in providing explanations.

Accommodators tend to avoid direct expression of feelings by using intermediaries, friends or relatives who informally act on their behalf when dealing with the conflict. Mediation tends to be used in more formal situations when one person believes that conflict will encourage growth in the relationship. **Accommodating style** is often used in East Asia, North America and South America.

The **dynamic style** uses indirect communication along with more emotional expressiveness. These people are comfortable with emotions, but tend to speak in metaphors and often use mediators. Their credibility is grounded in their degree of emotional expressiveness. User perceived strengths to this approach are using third parties to gather information and resolve conflicts, being skilled at observing nonverbal behaviors, and being comfortable with emotional displays. Weaknesses as perceived by others are appearing too emotional, unreasonable, and possibly devious, while rarely getting to the point. **Dynamic style** is often used in the Middle East, India, Sub-Saharan Africa, and various co-cultures in the United States.

It is important to recognize that people, and cultures, deal with conflict in a variety of ways for a variety of different reasons. Preferred styles are not static and rigid. People use different conflict styles with different partners. Gender, ethnicity, and religion may all influence how we handle conflict. Conflict may even occur over economic, political, and social issues.

5.3.10 Two Approaches to Managing Conflict

How people choose to deal with conflict in any given situation depends on the type of conflict and their relationship to the other person. Cognitive conflicts with close friends may be more discussion based in the United States, but more accommodating in Japan. Both are focused on preserving the harmony within the relationship. However, if the cognitive conflict takes place between acquaintances or strangers, where maintaining a relationship is not as important, the engagement or dynamic styles may come out.

Considering all the variations in how people choose to deal with conflict, it's important to distinguish between productive and destructive conflict as well as cooperative and competitive conflict.

- **Destructive conflict** leads people to make sweeping generalizations about the problem. Groups or individuals escalate the issues with negative attitudes. The conflict starts to deviate from the original issues, and anything in the relationship is open for examination or re-visiting. Participants try to jockey for power while using threats, coercion, and deception as polarization occurs. Leaders display militant, single-minded traits to rally their followers.
- **Productive conflict** features skills that make it possible to manage conflict situations effectively and appropriately. First the participants narrow the conflict to the original issue so that the specific problem is easier to understand. Next, the leaders stress mutually satisfactory outcomes and direct all their efforts to cooperative problem-solving. Research from Alan Sillars and colleagues found that during disputes, individuals selectively remember information that supports themselves and contradicts their partners, view their own communication more positively than their partners', and blame partners for failure to resolve the conflict (Sillars, Roberts, Leonard, & Dun, 2000). Sillars and colleagues also found that participant thoughts are often locked in simple, unqualified and negative views. Only in 2% of cases did respondents attribute cooperativeness to their partners and uncooperativeness to themselves (Sillars et al., 2000).
- **Competitive conflict** promotes escalation. When conflicts escalate and anger peaks, our minds are filled with negative thoughts of all the grievances and resentments we feel towards others (Sillars et al., 2000). Conflicted parties set up self-reinforcing and mutually confirming expectations. Coercion, deception, suspicion, rigidity, and poor communication are all hallmarks of a **competitive** atmosphere.
- **cooperative conflict** promotes perceived similarity, trust, flexibility, and open communication. If both parties are committed to the resolution process, there is a sense of joint ownership in reaching a conclusion.

Because it is very difficult to turn a **competitive conflict** relationship into a **cooperative conflict** relationship, a **cooperative** relationship must be encouraged from the very beginning before the conflict starts to escalate. A **cooperative conflict** atmosphere promotes perceived similarity, trust,

flexibility, and open communication. If both parties are committed to the resolution process, there is a sense of joint ownership in reaching a conclusion.

Consequently, the most important thing you can do to enhance *cooperative and productive conflict* is to practice critical self-reflection. Business consultants in the United States offer various versions of the **seven-step conflict resolution model** that is a good place to start. The seven steps are:

- State the Problem. Ask each of the conflicting parties to state their view of the problem as simply and clearly as possible.
- Restate the Problem. Ask each party to restate the problem as they understand the other party to view it.
- Understand the Problem. Each party must agree that the other side understands both ways of looking at the problem.
- Pinpoint the Issue. Zero in on the objective facts.
- Ask for Suggestions. Ask how the problem should be solved.
- Make a Plan.
- Follow up.

A quick review of the previous seven steps betrays its western roots with the unspoken assumption that conflicting individuals will be **verbally direct** and *e***motionally restrained** or advocates of the **discussion style** of conflict.

5.3.11 Culture and Managing Conflict

The strongest cultural factor that influences your conflict approach is whether you belong to an individualistic or collectivistic culture (Ting-Toomey, 1997). People raised in collectivistic cultures often view direct communication regarding conflict as personal attacks (Nishiyama, 1971), and consequently are more likely to manage conflict through avoidance or accommodation. People from individualistic cultures feel comfortable agreeing to disagree, and don't particularly see such clashes as personal affronts (Ting-Toomey, 1985). They are more likely to compete, react, or collaborate.

Gudykunst & Kim (2003) suggest that if you are an individualist in a dispute with a collectivist, you should consider the following:

- Recognize that collectivist may prefer to have a third party mediate the conflict so that those in conflict can manage their disagreement without direct confrontation to preserve relational harmony.
- Use more indirect verbal messages.
- Let go of the situation if the other person does not recognize the conflict exists or does not want to deal with it.

If you are a collectivist and are conflicting with someone from an individualist culture, the following guidelines may help:

- Recognize that individualists often separate conflicts from people. It's not personal.
- Use an assertive style, filled with "I" messages, and be direct by candidly stating your opinions and feelings.
- Manage conflicts even if you'd rather avoid them.

Another thing to consider is replacing the **ethno-centric** "seven steps" with a more culturally friendly, or **ethno-relative**,**four skills approach** from **Conflict Face-Negotiation Theory** (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). These skills are:

- **Mindful Listening:** Pay special attention to the cultural and personal assumptions being expressed in the conflict interaction. Paraphrase verbal and nonverbal content and emotional meaning of the other party's message to check for accurate interpretation.
- **Mindful Reframing:** This is another face-honoring skill that requires the creation of alternative contexts to shape our understanding of the conflict behavior.
- **Collaborative Dialogue:** An exchange of dialogue that is oriented fully in the present moment and builds on Mindful Listening and Mindful Reframing to practice communicating with different linguistic or contextual resources.
- **Culture-based Conflict Resolution Steps** is a seven-step conflict resolution model that guides conflicting groups to identify the background of a problem, analyze the cultural assumptions and underlying values of a person in a conflict situation, and promotes ways to achieve harmony and share a common goal.
    - What is my cultural and personal assessment of the problem?
    - Why did I form this assessment and what is the source of this assessment?
    - What are the underlying assumptions or values that drive my assessment?
    - How do I know they are relative or valid in this conflict context?
    - What reasons might I have for maintaining or changing my underlying conflict premise?
    - How should I change my cultural or personal premises into the direction that promotes deeper intercultural understanding?
    - How should I flex **adaptively** on both verbal and nonverbal conflict style levels in order to display **facework** sensitive behaviors and to facilitate a productive common-interest outcome?

(Ting-Toomey, 2012; Fisher-Yoshida, 2005; Mezirow, 2000)

5.3.12 Conclusion

Just as there is no consensus across cultures about what constitutes a conflict or how the conflicting events should be framed, there are also many different conflict response theories. LeBaron, Hammer, Sillars, Gudykunst, Kim, and Ting-Toomey are only a few of the many researchers who have explored the complexities of intercultural conflict. It is also a topic of interest for sociologists, psychologists, business managers, educators, and communities. Acquiring knowledge about personal and intercultural conflict styles can hopefully help us transform conflicts into meaningful dialogue, and become better communicators in the process.

5.3.13 Key Vocabulary

- affective conflict
- conflict of interest
- value conflict
- cognitive conflict
- goal conflict
- direct vs.indirect approach
- emotional expressiveness vs. restraint
- destructive vs. productive
- competitive vs. cooperative
- Conflict Face-Negotiation Theory
- mindful listening
- mindful reframing
- collaborative dialogue
- culture-based conflict resolution steps
- conflict
- face
- facework

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Improving Intercultural Communication

6.1: Striving for Engaged and Effective Intercultural Communication

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6.1: Striving for Engaged and Effective Intercultural Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Define intercultural communication competence.

By this point in the semester, you have many intercultural concepts and theories to help you be a better communicator. With all activities, it takes practice to be a more competent communicator. In this final chapter, we will leave you with a few suggestions on how you can improve your communication skills with individuals from other cultures.

Richard Wiseman from California State University has discovered some features of effective intercultural communication that you can use to improve. He has studied intercultural communicators for many years and provides a crisp review of what it means to be good at communicating across cultures in his chapter on intercultural communication competence. Wiseman's basic recipe is fairly simple. You have intercultural communication competence if you can communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations. It's a key aspect of cultural competence. The key lies in understanding what it means to be effective and what it means to be appropriate.

Your intercultural communication is effective when it allows you to achieve a goal that you care about. This is the first part of intercultural communication competence. Wiseman describes the components of effective intercultural communication strategies. Based on this description, these are 5 steps you can use to increase how effective you are in intercultural interactions:

1. Think about what your goals are for an interaction before you engage the other person. Your goal may be to find out if you can trust the other person, or it may just be to get invited to a party. 1 / 3 Global Cognition

2. Think about what you need to do to achieve your goals. If you're trying to find out if you can trust someone, one way might be to ask them a question you already know the answer to. If you want to get invited to a party, you might say "I heard there's this special drink people have at parties around here. It sounds fantastic. I'd love to experience that before I go home."

Try to predict what the other person's responses will be to things you might say or do. This is where knowing the culture comes in handy so as to accurately take their perspective. If you ask a question that is considered very personal where the other person comes from in your quest to figure out if you can trust them, you could inadvertently lose their trust. And, it's possible that by showing that you know and appreciate something about another culture's customs you will inspire people to invite you to a party.

Pick a communication approach and try it out. This is the part where you have to 'pull it off', so to speak. If you've come up with a communication approach that you're not sure you can pull off, then you may want to try to generate some alternatives. Other people know when you're being genuine and when you aren't. In that regard it doesn't matter what culture they come from.

Reflect back on how effective your approach was after the interaction. This means thinking of each interaction you have as a learning experience. If it didn't go as you expected, you may want to try to figure out why. This can help you come up with a better approach next time. Appropriate Intercultural Communication But, achieving a goal you care about is not enough. According to Wiseman, intercultural communication competence also means you must communicate appropriately. Intercultural communication is appropriate when you achieve your goals through the use of messages and actions that are expected in the situation. This means that the actions and communication you use to achieve your goal are interpreted as meaningful by the other person you're interacting with. To make that happen, Wiseman contends, you need a trifecta of knowledge, skills, and motivation. Knowledge, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. You must have information about the people, the rules for communication used within their culture, the context, and the expectations members of the other culture have for interactions. Skills – You must be able to engage in a different style of communication than you're used to. You have to be motivated to interact with people who are different than you. This means being able to let go of any misgivings or negative emotions you may have towards them.

We encourage all of you to engage in a lifelong commitment to competent intercultural communication. Use the knowledge and information gained throughout this course to help you be better communicators. Afterall, our world can use more effective intercultural communication.[i]

"Take advantage of every opportunity to practice your communication skills so that when important occasions arise, you will have the gift, the style, the sharpness, the clarity, and the emotions to affect other people."~**Jim Rohn**

[i] Stokes-Rice, 2019

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