FIFTH EDITION

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN CONTEXTS

Judith N. Martin / Thomas K. Nakayama

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CHAPTER

1

WHY STUDY INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION?

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Identify six imperatives for studying intercultural communication.
2. Describe how technology can impact intercultural interaction.
3. Describe how global and domestic economic conditions influence intercultural relations.
4. Explain how understanding intercultural communication can facilitate resolution of intercultural conflict.
5. Explain how studying intercultural communication can lead to increased self-understanding.
6. Understand the difference among a universalistic, a relativist, and a dialogic approach to the study of ethics and intercultural communication.
7. Identify and describe three characteristics of an ethical student of culture.

When I was back home [Kuwait], before I came to the United States to go to college, I knew all about my culture and about my religion. However, I did not really know what other people from the other world [United States] think of Middle Eastern people or Muslims in general. So, what I have witnessed is a lot of discrimination in this country, not only against my race but against other groups. . . . Yet I understand that not all Americans hate us, I met a lot of Americans who are cooperative with me and show me love and are interested to know about my country and culture.

—Mohamad

Our world is run by money. The only way to be able to gain power in the world is through your economic status. A major part of gaining economic status is to be able to negotiate and do business with people of different cultures. The technology available in this age simplifies the task.

—Alex

Both Mohamad's and Alex's experiences point to the benefits and challenges of intercultural communication. Through intercultural relationships, we can learn a tremendous amount about other people and their cultures, and about ourselves and our own cultural background. At the same time, there are many challenges. Intercultural communication can also involve barriers like stereotyping and discrimination. And these relationships take place in complex historical and political contexts. Mohamad's experience in the United States is probably more challenging today than it would have been several years ago because of recent political events. An important goal in this book is how to increase your understanding of the dynamics at work in intercultural interaction.

This book will expose you to the variety of approaches we use to study intercultural communication. We also weave into the text our personal stories to make theory come alive. By linking theory and practice, we hope to give a fuller picture of intercultural communication than either one alone could offer.

We bring many intercultural communication experiences to the text. As you read, you will learn not only about both of us as individuals but also about our views of intercultural communication. Don't be overwhelmed by the seeming complexity of intercultural communication. Not knowing everything that you would like to know is very much a part of this process.

Why is it important to focus on intercultural communication and to strive to become better at this complex pattern of interaction? We can think of at least six reasons; perhaps you can add more.

THE SELF-AWARENESS IMPERATIVE

One of the most important reasons for studying intercultural communication is the awareness it raises of our own cultural identity and background. This is also one of the least obvious reasons. Peter Adler (1975), a noted social psychologist, observes that the study of intercultural communication begins as a journey into another culture and reality and ends as a journey into one's own culture.

We gain insights in intercultural experiences overseas. When Judith was teaching high school in Algeria, a Muslim country in North Africa, she realized something about her religious identity as a Protestant. December 25 came and went, and she taught classes with no mention of Christmas. Judith had never thought about how special the celebration of Christmas was or how important the holiday was to her. She then recognized on a personal level the uniqueness of this particular cultural practice. Erla, a graduate student from Iceland, notes the increased knowledge and appreciation she's gained concerning her home country:

> *Living in another country widens your horizon. It makes you appreciate the things you have, and it strengthens the family unit. You look at your country from a different point of view. We have learned not to expect everything to be the same as "at home," but if we happen to find something that reminds us of home, we really appreciate it and it makes us very happy. Ultimately we are all very thankful that we had the opportunity to live in another country.*

However, it is important to recognize that intercultural learning is not always easy or comfortable. Sometimes intercultural encounters makes us aware of our own **ethnocentrism**—a tendency to think that our own culture is superior to other cultures. This means that we assume, subconsciously, that the way we do things is the only way. For example, when Tom first visited France he was surprised to discover that shoppers are expected to greet shopkeepers when entering a small store. Or that French people sometimes ate horsemeat, snails, and very fragrant cheeses. Sometimes Americans think that these foods shouldn't be eaten. This attitude that foods we eat are somehow normal and that people shouldn't eat these other foods is a kind of ethnocentrism. To be surprised or even taken aback by unfamiliar customs is not unexpected; however, a refusal to expand your cultural horizons or to acknowledge the legitimacy of cultural practices different from your own can lead to intergroup misunderstandings and conflict.

ethnocentrism A tendency to think that our own culture is superior to other cultures.

What you learn depends on your social and economic position in society. Self-awareness through intercultural contact for someone from a racial or minority group may mean learning to be wary and not surprised at subtle slights by members of the dominant majority—and reminders of their place in society. For example, a Chinese American colleague is sometimes approached at professional meetings by white communication professors who ask her to take their drink order.

If you are white and middle class, intercultural learning may mean an enhanced awareness of your privilege. A white colleague tells of feeling uncomfortable staying in a Jamaican resort, being served by blacks whose ancestors were brought there as slaves by European colonizers. On the one hand, it is privilege that allows travelers like our colleague to experience new cultures and places. On the other hand, one might wonder if we, through this type of travel, are reproducing those same historical postcolonial economic patterns.

Self-awareness, then, that comes through intercultural learning may involve an increased awareness of being caught up in political, economic, and historical systems—not of our own making.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC IMPERATIVE

You have probably observed that your world is increasingly diverse. You may have classes with students who differ from you in ethnicity, race, religion, and/or nationality. College and university student bodies are becoming increasingly diverse. According to a recent report, minority student enrollment will rise both in absolute number of students—up about 2 million—and in percentage terms, growing from 29.4% of overall undergraduate enrollment in 1995 to 37.2% in 2015. The share of white students on campuses nationwide will decline to 62.8% in 2015, a drop of 7.8% over 1995 levels (Carnevale & Fry, 2000).

Sports are a very visible part of this increasing diversity. In professional men's basketball, for example, "As of April 16, 2008, official rosters for the 2007–08 NBA season featured 76 international players from 31 countries and territories" (NBA, 2008). This increasing diversity extends to women's sports as well, including the LPGA where "Sixteen of the top-20 current money earners were born outside of the United States. Eight of those women are South Korean followed by two Swedes, two Australians, a Mexican, a Norwegian, a Brazilian and a Taiwanese" (The Canadian Press, 2008). This increasing diversity comes from changing U.S. demographics and more global interaction of people. (See Figure 1-1.)

Changing U.S. Demographics

demographics The characteristics of a population, especially as classified by race, ethnicity, age, sex, and income.

U.S. **demographics** are projected to change dramatically during your lifetime—the next 50 years. Another source of increased opportunity for intercultural contact exists because of the increasing cultural diversity in the United States. The 2000 census revealed a dramatic increase in ethnic/racial diversity, and this trend is expected to continue, as shown in Figure 1-2 (Passel & Cohn, 2008). The Hispanic population will triple in size and constitute approximately 30% of the population by 2050; in the same time period, the Asian American population will double in size and will constitute about 10% of the total population. African Americans will remain approximately the same in numbers and comprise 13% of the population; whites will continue to be a smaller majority as minority populations increase in number.

The nation's elderly population will more than double in size from 2005 through 2050, as the baby boom generation enters the traditional retirement years. The number of working-age Americans and children will grow more slowly than the elderly population and will shrink as a share of the total population (Passel & Cohn, 2008).

What is also interesting is the racial distribution in the various geographical regions. The Population Reference Bureau (PRB) computed a "diversity index" showing that the highest ethnic diversity is concentrated in the southeastern and southwestern regions of the United States. Minority concentrations are projected to increase especially in the South, Southwest, and West. The PRB estimates that, by 2025, minority groups will account for over 50% of the population in four states (Hawaii, California, New Mexico, Texas) (www.prb.org/AmeristatTemplate.cfm?Section=Estimates).

FIGURE 1-1 Rapid changes in technology, demographics, and economic forces mean that you are likely to come into contact with many people with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Although many of these communication experiences will be in professional and work situations, many other interactions will be in public and social settings. (© *Esbin-Anderson/The Image Works*)

There is increasing diversity in the U.S. workforce as well. The workforce is expected to continue to get older, and there will also be proportionately more women working. What accounts for these changes? The workforce will be older because the baby boomers are aging. More women are in the workforce for several reasons. First, economic pressures have come to bear; more women are single parents, and even in two-parent families, it often takes two incomes to meet family expenses. Second, the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s resulted in more women seeking careers and jobs outside the home. In addition, the workforce is more ethnically and racially diverse—in part, simply because there are more minorities now than before, but also because of civil rights efforts, which led to more opportunities for minorities in business and industry.

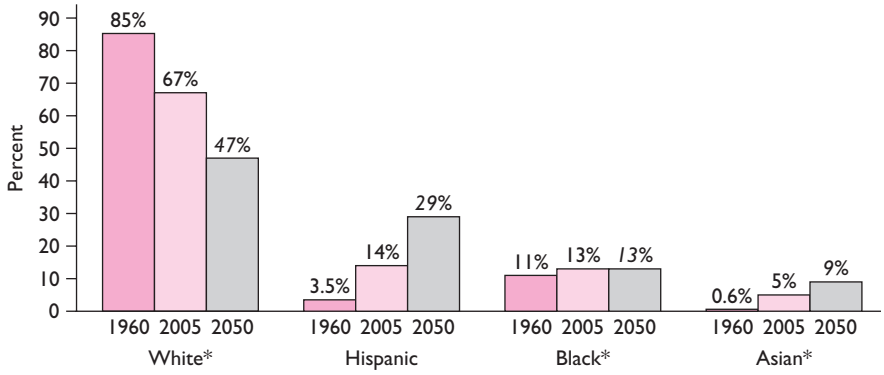

FIGURE 1-2 Population by race and ethnicity, actual and projected: 1960, 2005 and 2050 (% of total)

Source: From Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, U.S. Population Projections: 2005–2050, Pew Research Center, 2008, p. 9.

Note: All races modified and not Hispanic (*); American Indian/Alaska Native not shown. See "Methodology." Projections for 2050 indicated by light gray bars.

Changing Immigration Patterns

The second source of demographic change is different immigration patterns. Although the United States has often been thought of as a nation of immigrants, it is also a nation that established itself by subjugating the original inhabitants and that prospered to some extent as a result of slave labor. These aspects of national identity are important in understanding contemporary society.

Today, immigration has changed the social landscape significantly. Prior to the 1970s, most of the immigrants to the United States came from Europe, but this changed in the 1980s and 1990s. As of 2006, almost one-third (30.8%) of the foreign-born population came from Mexico. South America, Central America, and the Caribbean combined to account for one in four immigrants (24.8%). Similarly, Asian immigrants accounted for 23.6% of the population increase (http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/foreignborn2006/Table-3.pdf). European immigration continues to decline; as of 2002, only 14% of immigrants to the United States were from Europe (www.cis.org/articles/2002/back1302.pdf). These shifts in patterns of immigration have resulted in a much more racially and ethnically diverse population. It's not hard to see that the United States is becoming more heterogeneous. We address the issue of whites losing majority status in Chapter 5.

heterogeneous Difference(s) in a group, culture, or population.

homogeneous Similarity in a group, culture, or population.

Sometimes more **heterogeneous** cultures are contrasted to more **homogeneous** cultures. Instead of thinking of cultures as either heterogeneous or homogeneous, it is more useful to think about cultures as more or less heterogeneous (or more or less homogeneous). Cultures can change over time and become more or less homogeneous. They can also be more heterogeneous than another culture.

This heterogeneity presents many opportunities and challenges for students of intercultural communication. The tensions among heterogeneous groups, as well as fears on the part of the politically dominant groups, must be acknowledged. California's Proposition 187, which passed in the November 1994 election, excludes nondocumented immigrants from receiving public health and social services. This proposition has remained highly controversial and has led to protests and court challenges. The subsequent California Civil Rights Initiative (Proposition 209), which passed in November 1996, further extended the challenges to diversity by eliminating many affirmative action programs. And in 1997, Californians passed Proposition 227, which will eliminate bilingual education in schools, pending court rulings. Yet in October 2003, Californians voted to defeat Proposition 54, the Racial Privacy Initiative, that would have prohibited much of the racial information collected and used by the state and local governments in California. Fearful that the loss of this information would further erode protections against racial discrimination, as well as other concerns, led to the defeat of this proposition, but its proponent, Ward Connerly, had indicated his interest in bringing it forward again (Flores, Moon, & Nakayama, 2006).

We should also note the potential opportunities in a culturally diverse society. **Diversity** can expand our conceptions of what is possible—linguistically, politically, socially—as various lifestyles and ways of thinking converge. However, increased opportunity does not always lead to increased interaction. A recent "freshman survey" conducted by a research institute at UCLA reported that "a growing number of students appeared unlikely to have a diverse set of friends in college" (Farrell, 2005). This may be because these students are graduating from high schools that are becoming increasingly more segregated (see Point of View).

diversity The quality of being different.

To get a better sense of the situation in the United States today, let's take a look at our history. As mentioned previously, the United States has often been referred to as a nation of **immigrants**, but this is only partly true. When Europeans began arriving on the shores of the New World, an estimated 8 to 10 million Native Americans were already living here. Their ancestors probably began to arrive via the Bering Strait at least 40,000 years earlier. The outcome of the encounters between these groups—the colonizing Europeans and the native peoples—is well known. By 1940, the Native American population of the United States had been reduced to an estimated 250,000. Today, about 1.9 million Native Americans (from 542 recognized tribes) live in the United States (Brewer & Suchan, 2001).

immigrants People who come to a new country, region, or environment to settle more or less permanently. (Compare with **sojourners.**)

African American Immigrants African Americans represent a special case in the history of U.S. immigration. African Americans did not choose to emigrate but were brought here involuntarily, mainly as slave labor. Many Europeans also emigrated as indentured servants. However, the system of contract servitude was gradually replaced by perpetual servitude, or slavery, almost wholly of Africans. Many landowners wanted captive workers who could not escape and who could not become competitors. They turned to slave labor.

The slave trade, developed by European and African merchants, lasted about 350 years, although slavery was outlawed in Europe long before it was

POINT *of* VIEW

In this article Harinder Bahra tackles some problems relating to race in university education in the United Kingdom. Do you think this article could apply to the United States as well?

Far from celebrating the growing diversity of UK university staff and students, the higher education sector is almost doing the opposite. There has been a collective failure of employers in the university sector to tackle race discrimination and racism, or even accept it exists.

Like football clubs, universities are descending on developing countries, picking up cheaper black and minority ethnic (BME) researchers and lecturers in response to the transatlantic brain drain and continued pressure on operating costs. BME staff are often on part-time or fixed-term contracts with lower salaries and have difficulty in progressing through to senior positions. Meanwhile, BME students are increasingly being stereotyped as "extremists" in addition to being seen as academically less able.

As the University and College Union today launches a race equality campaign it is high time to ask what is being done.

Some universities, like the trade union sector, have appointed BME chancellors or presidents in voluntary, unpaid roles, but without corresponding changes in senior paid positions. This window dressing presents a diverse public profile, but still preserves the status quo.

Source: From H. Bahra, "Time to kick racism out of university." *The Guardian*, November 16, 2008. Retrieved May 13, 2008, from http://education.guardian.co.uk/racism/comment/0,,1949487,00.html.

outlawed in the United States. Roughly 10 million Africans reached the Americas, although most died in the brutal overseas passage (Curtin, 1969). Slavery is an important aspect of U.S. immigration history. As James Baldwin (1955) suggested, the legacy of slavery makes contemporary interracial relations in the United States very different from interracial relations in Europe and other regions of the world.

Slavery presents a moral dilemma for many whites even today. A common response is simply to ignore history. Many people assert that because not all whites owned slaves we should forget the past and move on. For others, forgetting the past is not acceptable. In fact, some historians, like James Loewen, maintain that acknowledging and understanding the past is the only viable alternative in moving forward. In his book *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, Loewen (1995) analyzes the content in contemporary high school history books and acknowledges that they do present the horrors of slavery. What is missing, however, is the connection of slavery to the current racial tensions in the United States:

Perhaps telling realistically what slavery was like for slaves is the easy part. After all, slavery as an institution is dead. We have progressed beyond it, so we

> *can acknowledge its evils. . . . Without explaining its relevance to the present, however, extensive coverage of slavery is like extensive coverage of the Hawley-Smoot Tariff—just more facts for hapless eleventh graders to memorize. Slavery's twin legacies to the present are the social and economic inferiority it conferred upon blacks and the cultural racism it instilled in whites. Both continue to haunt our society. Therefore, treating slavery's enduring legacy is necessarily controversial. Unlike slavery, racism is not over yet. To function adequately in civic life in our troubled times, students must learn what causes racism. (p. 143)*

Scholar and theologian Cornel West (1993) agrees that we should begin by acknowledging the historical flaws of U.S. society and recognizing the historical consequences of slavery. For instance, the United States has several Holocaust museums but no organized, official recognition of the horrors of slavery. Perhaps it is easier for us to focus on the negative events of another nation's history than on those of our own. On the other hand, many U.S. Americans feel that the election of Barack Obama, the first African-American president, shows some progress in U.S. race relations. In Chapter 4, we explore the importance of history in understanding the dynamics of intercultural communication.

Relationships with New Immigrants Relationships between residents and immigrants—between oldtimers and newcomers—have often been filled with tension and conflict. In the 19th century, Native Americans sometimes were caught in the middle of European rivalries. During the War of 1812, for example, Indian allies of the British were severely punished by the United States when the war ended. In 1832, the U.S. Congress recognized the Indian nations' right to self-government, but in 1871, a congressional act prohibited treaties between the U.S. government and Indian tribes. In 1887, Congress passed the Dawes Severalty Act, terminating Native Americans' special relationship with the U.S. government and paving the way for their removal from their homelands.

As waves of immigrants continued to roll in from Europe, the more firmly established European—mainly British—immigrants tried to protect their way of life, language, and culture. As one citizen lamented in 1856,

> *Four-fifths of the beggary and three-fifths of the crime spring from our foreign population; more than half the public charities, more than half the prisons and almshouses, more than half the police and the cost of administering criminal justice are for foreigners. (quoted in Cole, 1998, p. 126)*

The foreigners to which this citizen was referring were mostly from Ireland, devastated by the potato famines, and from Germany, which had fallen on hard economic and political times. Historian James Banks (1991) identifies other anti-immigrant events throughout the nation's history. As early as 1729, an English mob prevented a group of Irish immigrants from landing in Boston. A few years later, another mob destroyed a new Scots-Irish Presbyterian church in Worcester,

Anglocentrism Using Anglo or white cultural standards as the criteria for interpretations and judgments of behaviors and attitudes.

melting pot A metaphor that assumes that immigrants and cultural minorities will be assimilated into the U.S. majority culture, losing their original cultures.

nativistic Extremely patriotic to the point of being anti-immigrant.

Massachusetts. In these acts, we can see the **Anglocentrism** that characterized early U.S. history. Later, northern and western European (e.g., German and Dutch) characteristics were added to this model of American culture. Immigrants from southern, central, and eastern Europe (e.g., Italy and Poland) were expected to assimilate into the so-called mainstream culture—to jump into the **"melting pot"** and come out "American."

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a **nativistic** (anti-immigrant) movement propagated violence against newer immigrants. In 1885, 28 Chinese were killed in an anti-Chinese riot in Wyoming; in 1891, a white mob attacked a Chinese community in Los Angeles and killed 19 people; also in 1891, 11 Italian Americans were lynched in New Orleans.

Nativistic sentiment was well supported at the government level. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, officially prohibiting anyone who lived in China from immigrating to this country. In 1924, the Johnson-Read Act and the Oriental Exclusion Act established extreme quotas on immigration, virtually precluding the legal immigration of Asians. According to Ronald Takaki (1989), these two laws "provided for immigration based on nationality quotas: the number of immigrants to be admitted annually was limited to 2% of the foreign-born individuals of each nationality residing in the United States in 1890" (p. 209). The nativistic sentiment increasingly was manifested in arguments that economic and political opportunities should be reserved solely for whites, and not just for native-born Americans.

By the 1930s, southern and eastern European groups were considered "assimilatable," and the concept of race assumed new meaning. All of the so-called white races were now considered one, so racial hostilities could focus on ethnic (nonwhite) groups, such as Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Mexican Americans (Banks, 1991). Sociologist David Roediger (1991) traces how devastating this racialization was, particularly for African Americans. In the growing, but sometimes fragile, economy of the first half of the 20th century, white workers had an advantage. Although white immigrants received low wages, they had access to better schools and to public facilities, and they were accorded greater public acceptance. People of color often were considered less fit to receive economic benefits and, to some extent, to be not truly American (Foner, 1998).

The notion of the melting pot began to break down as immigrants came in larger numbers from outside of Europe. Although European immigrants were able to melt into white society, other immigrants were barred from doing so. In order to melt into white society, European immigrants were encouraged to assimilate by speaking English only and dropping their culturally specific customs. As part of this melting pot experience, many Americans of European ancestry today do not speak their forebearers' languages, such as German, Dutch, Norwegian, Polish, or Hungarian.

Although the notion of the melting pot could explain European immigrant experiences, the metaphor did not explain other immigrant experiences. Immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and Africa did not simply blend into white

POINT *of* VIEW

The politics of immigration are always a topic of interest in America. An especially divisive year for immigration policy, 2008, highlighted the remarkably different approaches of various regions of the United States.

	Arizona's Employer Sanctions Law	Bay Area Day Laborer Policies
Policy	A statewide effort to punish employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants	A San Francisco area effort to benefit the working conditions of day laborers, many of whom are undocumented immigrants
Specifics	Employers who violate the law will potentially have their business licenses revoked	Laborers in specific areas are eligible for English classes, a variety of free health clinics, and other services
Results	Many illegal immigrants are leaving Arizona for other areas or for their home countries (CNN, 2007)	Workers show up at the day labor centers even when the economy is slow to commune and learn. (Nieves, 2008)

Sources: From Evelyn Nieves, "Housing Slowdown Puts Day Laborers in Limbo," *USA Today*, February 17, 2008. Retrieved from http://www.usatoday.com/money/economy/housing/2008-02-17-day-laborers_N.htm; CNN, "Illegal immigrants packing up and leaving Arizona," December 22, 2007. Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/12/22/immigrants.leave.ap/.

society. As we will see in Chapter 4, there are many legal and historical reasons why this did not happen. Some people are critical of the melting pot metaphor, not only because it does not explain the experiences of non-European immigrants but also because it implies that immigrants should give up their unique cultural backgrounds to become white and American.

Economic conditions make a big difference in attitudes toward foreign workers and immigration policies. During the Depression of the 1930s, Mexicans and Mexican Americans were forced to return to Mexico to free up jobs for white Americans. When prosperity returned in the 1940s, Mexicans were welcomed back as a source of cheap labor. This type of situation is not limited to the United States, but occurs all over the world. For example, Algerian workers are alternately welcomed and rejected in France, depending on the state of the French economy and the demand for imported labor. Guest workers from Turkey have been subjected to similar uncertainties in Germany. Indian workers in Kenya, Chinese immigrants in Malaysia, and many other workers toiling outside their native lands have suffered the vagaries of fluctuating economies and immigration policies. In Chapter 8, we discuss the implications of these migration patterns for intercultural communication.

The tradition of tension and conflict among cultures continues to this day. The conflicts that arise in Southern California exemplify many aspects of the demographic changes in the United States. We can examine on a variety of levels the tensions in Los Angeles among Latinos/as, African Americans, Korean Americans, and European Americans. Some of the conflict is related to different languages, values, and lifestyles. Some African Americans resent the economic success of recent Korean immigrants—a reaction that reflects a typical historical pattern. The conflict may also be due to the pattern of settlement that results in cultural **enclaves.**

enclaves (1) The territories that are surrounded by another country's territory; (2) cultural minority groups that live within a larger cultural group's territory.

Immigration and Economic Classes Some of the conflict may be related to the economic disparity that exists among these different groups. To understand this disparity, we need to look at issues of economic class. Most Americans are reluctant to admit that a class structure exists and even more reluctant to admit how difficult it is to move up in this structure. Indeed, most people live their lives in the same economic class into which they were born. And there are distinct class differences in clothing, housing, recreation, conversation, and other aspects of everyday life (Fussell, 1992). For example, the driveways to the homes of the very rich are usually obscured, whereas those of upper-class homes usually are long and curved and quite visible. Driveways leading to middle-class homes, in contrast, tend to go straight into garages.

The myth of a classless society is hardly benign. It not only reinforces middle- and upper-class beliefs in their own superior abilities but also promotes a false hope among the working class and the poor that they can get ahead. Whereas real-life success stories of upward mobility are rare, fictitious ones abound in literature, film, and television. But all such accounts perpetuate the myth. The reality is that the income gap between rich and poor in the United States is more extreme than in most industrialized countries. The ratio between rich and poor (measured as the percentage of total income held by the wealthiest 20% versus the poorest 20%) is approximately 11:1, one of the highest ratios in the industrialized world. The ratio in Germany and Japan, in contrast, is 4:1 (Mantsios, 2001). "According to recent data from the Internal Revenue Service, the richest 1% of Americans earned 21.2% of all U.S. income earned in 2005. That is a significant increase from 2004 when the top 1% earned 19% of the nation's income" (Wutkowski, 2007). And while the very rich U.S. Americans increased their wealth, the "average incomes for those in the bottom 90% dipped slightly compared with the year before, dropping $172, or 0.6%" (Johnston, 2007). These trends point to an increasing income gap.

It may be common knowledge that the gap between the wealthy and everyone else is growing wider, but the extent of the current gap is staggering. In a series investigating class in the United States, *New York Times* writer David Caty Johnston (2005) reported that between 1950 and 1970, for every additional dollar earned by the bottom 90% of the population, the top 0.01% earned an additional $162. Since then, that gap has skyrocketed. In revisiting this issue with more recent data, Johnston (2007) noted that "Per person, the top group received 440 times as much as the average person in the bottom half earned,

nearly doubling the gap from 1980." The widening gap is due partly to the loss of stable industrial jobs as companies move to cheaper labor markets within the United States and abroad. Class and demographic issues also play a role, with racial and ethnic minorities typically hardest hit by economic downturns.

Religious Diversity Immigration also contributes to religious diversity, bringing increasing numbers of Muslims, Buddhists, Confucians, Catholics, and others to the United States. The religious composition of the United States is rapidly changing due to a number of factors. According to the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey (2008) done by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 28% of adults have left the religion they were raised in (some choosing another religion, some choosing no religion). Catholics have lost the greatest number of members, but they also gained the most from immigration. The greatest growth has been among adults who are unaffiliated with any religion. What do these changes mean to the role of religion in a diverse society? What is the future of religion in the United States? Religious beliefs and practices often play an important role in everyday cultural life. One example is the very different views on abortion, described by our student Tanya:

> *Pro-choice and pro-lifers have incredibly different worldview lenses. These different lenses they see through are most of the time influenced by religion and social upbringing. The values are different, yet no side is wrong and cannot see through the same worldview lens as their opponents.*

These different worldviews can sometimes lead to prejudices and stereotypes. For example, stereotypes about Islam are widespread in U.S. popular culture. Political scientist Ali Muzrui (2001) describes Islam as the "ultimate negative 'Other' to the Christian tradition" and laments the rising tide of "Islamophobia" (fear of Islam and the hostility toward it). He lists the contrasting stereotypes:

> *Whereas Christianity is supposed to be peace loving, Islam is portrayed as fostering holy war (Jihad). Whereas Christianity liberates women, Islam enslaves them. Whereas Christianity is modern, Islam is medieval. Whereas Christianity is forward looking, Islam is backward looking. Whereas Christians prefer nonviolence, Muslims easily resort to terrorism. (p. 110)*

Muzrui goes on to present evidence to debunk each of these stereotypes. Religious diversity is part of the demographic imperative that challenges us to learn more about intercultural communication.

These increasingly diverse ethnic, racial, economic, and religious groups come into contact mostly during the day in schools, businesses, and other settings, bringing to the encounters different languages, histories, and economic statuses. This presents great challenges for us as a society and as individuals. The main challenge is to look beyond the stereotypes and biases, to recognize the disparities and differences, and to try to apply what we know about intercultural communication. Perhaps the first step is to realize that the melting pot metaphor probably was never viable, that it was not realistic to expect everyone to assimilate into the United States in the same way. Today we need a different metaphor, one that

POINT *of* VIEW

The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey points to some interesting religious demographic information. Note how religion intersects with other social categories. Here are some interesting findings:

- Among people who are married, nearly four in ten (37%) are married to a spouse with a different religious affiliation. (This figure includes Protestants who are married to another Protestant from a different denominational family, such as a Baptist who is married to a Methodist.) Hindus and Mormons are the most likely to be married (78% and 71%, respectively) and to be married to someone of the same religion (90% and 83%, respectively).
- The Midwest most closely resembles the religious makeup of the overall population. The South, by a wide margin, has the heaviest concentration of members of evangelical Protestant churches. The Northeast has the greatest concentration of Catholics, and the West has the largest proportion of unaffiliated people, including the largest proportion of atheists and agnostics.
- Of all the major racial and ethnic groups in the United States, black Americans are the most likely to report a formal religious affiliation. Even among those blacks who are unaffiliated, three in four belong to the "religious unaffiliated" category (that is, they say that religion is either somewhat or very important in their lives), compared with slightly more than one-third of the unaffiliated population overall.
- Nearly half of Hindus in the United States, one-third of Jews, and a quarter of Buddhists have obtained postgraduate education, compared with only about one in ten of the adult population overall. Hindus and Jews are also much more likely than other groups to report high income levels.
- People not affiliated with any particular religion stand out for their relative youth compared with other religious traditions. Among the unaffiliated, 31% are under age 30 and 71% are under age 50. Comparable numbers for the overall adult population are 20% and 59%, respectively.
- By contrast, members of mainline Protestant churches and Jews are older, on average, than members of other groups. Roughly half of Jews and members of mainline churches are age 50 and older, compared with approximately four in ten American adults overall.
- Members of Baptist churches account for one-third of all Protestants and close to one-fifth of the total U.S. adult population. Baptists also account for nearly two-thirds of members of historically black Protestant churches.

Source: From U.S. Religious Landscape Survey (2008), *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, http://religions.pewforum.org/reports.

STUDENT VOICES

One of my friends is in a relationship with someone from another race who happens to believe an entirely different religion than she does. She is Hispanic and Catholic and he is Caucasian and Christian. When I was talking to her boyfriend he told me that one of the things he has learned about my friend's culture is that in a Hispanic family everything is traditional. When you greet everyone you greet with a kiss on the cheek instead of a handshake which was very different from his culture. My friend states that everything has been pretty much easier except for the fact that her family has told her that they would prefer to see her with someone from her own culture. This makes it very hard to feel comfortable around her family when she brings her boyfriend around. The advice she gave me about entering an intercultural relationship is to not take other people's opinions seriously. Everyone has their views on things and you can't stop that. You have to live your life they way you want to and don't let people's words and thoughts bring you down.

—Brenna

reflects the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity that truly exists in our country. Perhaps we should think of the United States as a "salad," in which each group retains its own flavor and yet contributes to the whole. Or we might think of it as a "tapestry," with many different strands contributing to a unified pattern.

In any case, the United States is hardly a model of diversity; many countries are far more diverse ethnically. For example, Nigeria has some 200 ethnic groups, and Indonesia has a similar number. Nigeria was colonized by the British, and artificially drawn boundaries forced many different groups into one nation-state, which caused many conflicts. The diverse groups in Indonesia, in contrast, have largely coexisted amiably for many years. Diversity, therefore, does not necessarily lead to intercultural conflicts.

Fortunately, most individuals are able to negotiate day-to-day activities in spite of cultural differences. Diversity can even be a positive force. Demographic diversity in the United States has given us tremendous linguistic richness and culinary variety, varied resources to meet new social challenges, as well as domestic and international business opportunities.

THE ECONOMIC IMPERATIVE

The recent trend toward globalization—the creation of a world market in goods, services, labor, capital, and technology—is shown dramatically in the account of a journalist who asks a Dell computer manager where his laptop is made. The answer? It was codesigned by engineers in Texas and Taiwan; the microprocessor was made in one of Intel's factories in the Philippines, Costa Rica, Malaysia, or China; the memory came from factories in Korea, Germany, Taiwan, or Japan. Other components (keyboard, hard drive, batteries, etc.)

were made by Japanese, Taiwanese, Irish, Israeli, or British firms with factories mainly in Asia, and finally, the laptop was assembled in Taiwan (Friedman, 2005).

What is the ultimate impact of globalization on the average person? Some economists defend it, saying the losses are always offset by the gains in cheaper consumer prices. However, many working people, seeing their jobs outsourced to cheap labor in India, China, and Malaysia, feel threatened. An increasing number of economists agree. As one of the world's leading economists, Paul Samuelson (2005), argues, consumer gains are offset by income losses—if globalization causes enough Americans to suffer lower wages, America as a whole loses. The answer is not to resign from the world trading system, but rather to understand how and why the big winners from globalization, the Asian nations, are gaining and to learn from them, just as in the past, they learned from us (Maital, 2005).

The point is that, to compete effectively in this new global market, Americans must understand how business is conducted in other countries. American businesspeople should be able to negotiate deals that are advantageous to the U.S. economy. However, they are not always willing to take the time and effort to do this. For example, most U.S. automobile manufacturers do not produce automobiles that have right-hand drive, which prevents them from penetrating markets in nations like Japan. Stories abound of U.S. marketing slogans that were inaccurately translated, like Pepsi's "Come alive with the Pepsi Generation," which was translated into Chinese as "Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the grave" ("Ten Great Global Marketing Mistakes," 1998).

Cross-cultural trainers in the United States report that Japanese and other business personnel often spend years in the United States studying English and learning about the country before they decide to establish operations here or invest money. In contrast, many American companies provide little or no training before sending their workers overseas and expect to close business deals quickly, with little regard for cultural idiosyncrasies.

Many management experts have examined other countries' practices for ways to increase U.S. productivity. One such idea was "quality circles," borrowed from the Japanese and now popular in the United States. Another Japanese strength is the belief in effort for its own sake. Japanese employees work longer hours and sometimes produce better products simply as a result of persistence. This trait also pays off in schools: Japanese students score higher on standardized exams than do American students (Fallows, 1989).

It will also behoove Americans to research how to do business in the huge emerging market that is 21st-century China. As shown in the Point of View box (see page 30), a recent gaffe by Nike reflects the general lack of cultural understanding about the Chinese.

Why do so many businesspeople have difficulty succeeding in Chinese and other Asian markets? The reasons involve both differences in business practices and cultural differences between East and West. Ambler and Witzel (2000) explain that business dealings in China, as in many Eastern countries,

STUDENT VOICES

Americans, including myself, sometimes have this belief that what we do here in the United States is the best and only way to do things. We put these "cultural blinders" on and are oblivious to any other cultures and/or values. Although American tradition has been and can be a big influence on other markets and business sectors, we are failing to realize that the way we do business is not the basis for all businesses. Most of our international business ventures are failing due to our stubbornness. In the past we felt that we could send someone to Mexico or Japan without any intercultural training and still show them how to do business. How wrong were we?

Today we realize it takes an understanding of others and their beliefs and values to truly gain respect and further our business and personal relationships. Businesses are taking the time and money to train their employees about the new culture that they will be submerged in. People in the past failed because we did not take into account that companies' attitudes and beliefs differed from ours. Good relations with other international businesses can produce a lifelong bond that can create great economic wealth for each country. The companies are not only training their employees for this culture shock but are training their families as well, because they know that without family support, this venture will surely fail. The United States has taken strides to correct their errors of the past and are continuing their efforts to produce intercultural employees, and I hope this trend continues.

—Luis

are relationship oriented, that businesses cannot succeed without respect and harmony. Specifically, in China, three concepts are crucial:

- *Qingmian* (human feelings), which involves respect for the feelings of others
- *He* (harmony), which emphasizes the smooth functioning of a group or society
- *Guanxi* (relationship or connection), which underscores the importance of relationships in Chinese business. (In Taiwan, it is known as "Kuan-hsi.")

The high value placed on these concepts highlights other differences as well. For example, contract law is practiced very differently in China. Whereas in the West the law is the essential set of rules of conduct, the "rules of conduct" in China are the ethics and standards of behavior required in a Confucian society. This means that social pressures rather than legal instruments are used to ensure compliance. Thus, what we might conceptualize as a legal issue may be seen in China as a relationship issue.

Sometimes there are cultural differences in work ethics. One of our students, Vincent, describes a difference he observed while working as an intern in a manufacturing company:

> *When looking back at this internship I can easily see that Mexican workers were more loyal to the company. I constantly noticed that American workers at this*

STUDENT VOICES

In the corporate world in Bangkok, the new year beginning on January 1 (as opposed to the Thai New Year or the Chinese New Year) is a time of giving gifts to valued customers. The company I worked for was real big on ethics, which was nice; they wanted to treat everyone equally and be fair in their business dealings, which was good, but they took it too far. During New Year's, companies usually give gifts to their customers as a way of saying thanks for their patronage. The gift you give depends on the customers' place in society and the amount of business they do with your company. What I hated is that this company (an American company) viewed that as unethical, as some form of a bribe. We could only go out and buy one item in bulk, and we'd have to give the same gift to all of the customers. I was so embarrassed to give those gifts. I hope the customers knew that I worked for an American company that just didn't understand the way things were done in Thailand.

—Chris

company would be walking around talking or smoking while they were supposed to be at their work stations, but the Mexican workers would never leave their stations until it was time for break. This sometimes created problems between Mexicans and other employees because of the differences in work ethics.

We discuss the implications of these types of cultural differences for relationships (Chapter 10) and conflicts (Chapter 11).

Cultural differences in business practices have implications not only when people from different companies do business with each other but also when people from different cultures work on the same team. One effect of globalization is increasing numbers of international teams—sometimes working as virtual teams and rarely meeting face-to-face. These teams present large challenges in intercultural communication. A recent Hewlett-Packard project involved a 16-country multilingual virtual team that operated on both sides of the international dateline. The leaders describe the challenges: "Relatively routine tasks, such as scheduling a meeting, become complex and fraught with interpersonal friction when one person's work day begins as another is sitting down to dinner or sound asleep. A simple e-mail exchange frazzles nerves because of cultural misunderstandings" (Snyder, 2003).

Even when employees have good language skills, they naturally interpret written and verbal communication through the filter of their own culture. For example, Israeli workers in the project just described wondered why their U.S. counterparts would sometimes seem upset by e-mail exchanges. It turned out that Israelis, who tend to be rather direct and sometimes blunt, were sending e-mails that seemed rude to their American counterparts. And Americans' e-mails seemed "wishy-washy" to the Israelis. The Americans' requests, with phrases like "Thanks in advance for sending me . . . ," mystified the Israelis who would say, "Thanks for what? I haven't done anything yet." After some cultural training, both sides adapted to the other (Snyder, 2003). In later chapters, we explore the implications of these and other cultural differences in communication practices.

Globalization presents many new issues. Increasingly, **multinational corporations** are moving operations to new locations, often overseas, because of lower labor costs. These business moves have far-reaching implications, including the loss of jobs at closed facilities. Many U.S.-owned companies have established production facilities, known as ***maquiladoras,*** along the U.S.–Mexican border, where workers produce goods bound mainly for U.S. markets. These companies benefit from lower labor costs, tax breaks, and relaxed environmental regulations. Although Mexican laborers profit from the jobs, there is a cost in terms of environmental hazards. *Maquiladoras* thus present intercultural challenges for Mexicans and U.S. Americans.

multinational corporations Companies that have operations in two or more nations.

maquiladoras Assembly plants or factories (mainly of U.S. companies) established on the U.S.–Mexican border and using mainly Mexican labor.

Domestic diversity also requires businesses to be attentive to cultural differences. As the workforce becomes more diverse, many businesses are interested in capitalizing on these differences for economic gain. As trainers Bernardo M. Ferdman and Sara Einy Brody (1996) suggest, "Once organizations learn to adopt an inclusive orientation in dealing with their members, this will also have a positive impact on how they look at their customer base, how they develop products and assess business opportunities, and how they relate to their communities" (p. 289).

Understanding cultural differences involves not only working with diverse employees but also recognizing new business markets, developing new products, and so on. From this perspective, diversity is a potentially powerful economic resource if organizations view the challenge as an opportunity. In this sense, then, business can capitalize on diversity.

THE TECHNOLOGICAL IMPERATIVE

Today, with the explosion of computers and other communication technologies, we truly live in the **global village** envisioned by media expert Marshall McLuhan (1967). Communication technology links us to events from the most remote parts of the world and connects us to persons we may never meet face-to-face from around the world. Perhaps the most revolutionary advancement has been the Internet.

global village A term coined by Marshall McLuhan in the 1960s that refers to a world in which communication technology unites people in remote parts of the world.

Technology and Human Communication

The impact of technology on our everyday communication is staggering. Think of how often you use technology to communicate in any given day: You may text-message friends about evening plans, e-mail your family to tell them the latest news, participate in a discussion board for one of your courses, and check your cell phone Web site to see how many more minutes you can use this month without getting charged. And you are not alone. The number of hours U.S. Americans spent online continues to increase, and young people are the most frequent users of the Internet (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2005) and cell phones (Progue, 2004; http://www.clickz.com/stats/sectors/wireless/print.php/3530886).

More and more people around the world are using technology to communicate with each other. Consider these statistics:

- The rate of Internet usage in Latin America/Caribbean went up 660% between 2000 and 2008 (www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm).
- The rate of Internet usage in the Middle East went up 1,176% between 2000 and 2008 (www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm).
- By the end of 2009, half of the world's population will be using cell phones. Africa alone will add 265 million subscribers by 2012 (www.mobiledia.com/news/43104.html).
- Over 77% of Sweden's population spends time online. This is the highest usage rate in the world (www.internetworldstats.com/europa.htm#se).

The advent of the Internet and other communication technologies has tremendous implications for intercultural communication. We will focus on five aspects of culture and technology: (1) increased information about peoples and cultures; (2) increased contact with people who are different from us; (3) increased contact with people who are similar to us who can provide communities of support; (4) identity, culture, and technology; and (5) differential access to communication technology.

Increase in Information You may have found that the Internet provides access to information about other cultures and other peoples. We can now instantaneously find out almost anything about any group in the world simply by searching the Internet. This *should* give us a better understanding of our global neighbors and perhaps some motivation to coexist peacefully in our global village; however, the evidence seems to be to the contrary. According to the Center for Systemic Peace, of the approximately 75 armed conflicts in the world between 1990 and 2004, only 10 have been traditional international conflicts. The rest have arisen between ethnic or political groups within a country—for example, in Cyprus, Russia, Turkey, Kashmir, Ethiopia, Bosnia, and Sudan (http://members.aol.com/cspmgm/warlist.htm). Apparently, knowledge about others does not necessarily lead to better communication or heightened understanding. We will tackle issues like this in later chapters.

Through communication technologies like the World Wide Web, people also have access to increasing amounts of information about what is happening in their own and other countries. This is especially important in countries where media are government controlled. For example, people in Pakistan and Afghanistan learn more about military actions in their countries by accessing CNN.com than through their local newspapers. In some ways, the Internet has democratized information, in that more people control and disseminate information than ever before. For example, there are some 32,000 Internet police in China, who frequently find and arrest people for criticizing the government online. They block search engine sites, close Internet cafés, and block e-mails; they can even can reroute Web site traffic to alternate sites maintained by

routers in Shanghai and Beijing (http://ezinearticles.com/?Chinese-Ministry-of-Information-Internet-Registration-Laws&id=41850).

In spite of this and other governments' attempts to limit their citizens' access to computer-mediated communication (CMC), the Internet is providing information, world news, and possibilities for interpersonal communication that were not available previously (Scanlon, 2003; Wheeler, 2001).

Increased Contact with People Who Differ Communication technology brings us in contact with people we might never have the opportunity to know otherwise. And many of these people are from different cultural backgrounds. The Internet/e-mail allows us to have "pen pals" from different cultures and to carry on discussions with these people in virtual chat rooms and on discussion boards.

However, such mediated communication across cultures does present unique challenges. Unlike face-to-face communication, mediated communication filters out important nonverbal cues. One of our students, Val, described the challenges of intercultural e-mails:

> *I met a girl from Korea my junior year of college, and we became good friends. When it came time for her to go back to Korea we decided we would stay friends and become pen pals via e-mail. I found it much more difficult to communicate with her because she didn't always understand what I was writing and I couldn't repeat my sentences like I could if I were speaking to her, and the same applied to her. It definitely puts a strain on our relationship.*

When we are talking to individuals face-to-face, we use nonverbal information to help us interpret what they are *really* saying—tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and so on. The absence of these cues in mediated contexts (e.g., e-mail, chat rooms) makes communication more difficult and can lead to misunderstandings. And these misunderstandings can be compounded when communicating across cultures. For example, a U.S. colleague reports that she was offended when the e-mails she received from colleagues overseas seemed too brief and to the point. She has since discovered that her colleagues overseas are charged computer time by the minute and so have learned to be very concise in their e-mail messages. What she interpreted as rudeness had more to do with the economic context in which the interaction took place than with the communicators themselves. If she had been able to observe their nonverbal cues while communicating, she probably would have known that they were not being rude.

Also, language may be a factor. The people we talk to on e-mail networks may speak languages different from our own. An interesting situation arose recently for one of the authors of this book. Tom was using an electronic bulletin board when someone posted a message in Dutch. It was met with a flurry of hostile responses from people protesting the use of an exclusionary language, one most people couldn't read. A discussion ensued about which languages might be acceptable on the network.

The decision reached was that subscribers could post messages in any language as long as there was an English translation. In a subsequent posting, someone from a university in South Africa recommended a book "for those of you who can read Dutch (heh-heh, all four of us)"—an apparent reaction to the exclusionary sentiments of other subscribers. Machine and other translation techniques are new ways to facilitate online intercultural communication, as seen in the "Point of View" box. The use of some languages is given even more privilege in the high-tech communication world, where we are likely to encounter many more people. Although many experts think that the Internet is dominated by English, there are indications that Chinese is becoming a formidable linguistic player in the Internet world. According to one source, the first day that registration opened for Chinese language domain names, 360,000 applications were filed (english1.e21times.com/asp/sacd.asp?r=880&p=0). Surprisingly, the most recent research suggests that the move is actually toward more multilingualism on the Net—rather than toward a global English Internet (Dor, 2004). Some speculate that this is because global businesses need to adapt to local languages to sell their products and also that learning a language is an awesome task and it is not feasible to think of the entire world learning a second language to accommodate.

Increased Contact with People Who Are Similar Communication technology also allows us to have more contact with people who are very similar to ourselves. Perhaps you participate in chat rooms or discussion boards with people who share your interests and opinions. Perhaps you turn to Internet groups for support and community. For example, international students can stay in touch with their local communities, keep up with what's going on at home, and receive emotional support during difficult times of cultural adaptation.

diasporic groups Ethnic and/or national groups that are geographically dispersed throughout the world.

The Internet can also be used to strengthen a sense of identity, as is the case for some **diasporic groups**—ethnic and/or national groups that are geographically dispersed throughout the world, sometimes as refugees fleeing from war, sometimes as voluntary emigrants. A recent study of children of South Asian immigrants found that the Internet plays a major role in creating a sense of community and ethnic identity for these young people. Whereas earlier generations of immigrants were expected to assimilate as quickly as possible into the host culture, the Internet now allows these children of immigrants to connect with other Indian adolescents, discussing religion and issues concerning Indian and immigrant identity. Similar diasporic discussions are held in the *Kava Bowl* and the *Kamehameha Roundtable*, online meeting places for the Polynesian diaspora and other people from the Pacific Islands who live in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand (Franklin, 2003). Similarly, discussion boards can provide virtual communities of support for cultural minorities (e.g., Planetout.com, a discussion board for gays and lesbians). However, the Internet can also provide a venue for like-minded people to promote prejudice and hatred. According to a recent report from a British e-mail filtering company, the number of hate and violence Web sites has grown by nearly 300% since 2000. In 2000, this company was monitoring about 2,756 Web sites that were categorized as hate and violence

POINT *of* VIEW

New techniques and technologies of translation have helped to bring different bodies of literature to English audiences. Remember from earlier that the Middle East has seen a sharp increase in Internet usage since 2008. In this article, the topic of Arabic literature is explored.

> *Saudi author Raja Alsanea spoke on topic [of Arabic literature in the English language], talking interestingly about her successful novel* Girls of Riyadh *and receiving the lion's share of questions from the audience.*
>
> *Translated into 23 languages and started when the author was only 18, this novel, Alsanea explained, could be seen as having captured the experience of a generation of young Saudi women who have used the Internet—blogs, forums and chat sites—to create a "virtual liberating space" allowing freedom of expression. A new language, "Arabish," had been invented for use in this space, consisting of a mix of English and colloquial Arabic written in the Latin alphabet.*
>
> *Asked whether the success of* Girls of Riyadh *in translation had surprised her, Alsanea said that she had collaborated on the English translation and was aware that "western readers are more interested in Saudi Arabia than they are in Saudi literature." She was not "a feminist or an activist," though the novel did show up the "confused boundary" between "freedom in virtual space and the traditions that dominate the non-virtual space of family and society."*

Source: From David Tresilian, "The fun of the fair." Retrieved May 13, 2008, from http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/894/cu21.htm.

sites. By April 2004, that figure had risen to 10,926. Even more worrying, however, is that since January 2004, the number of sites that promote hatred against Americans, Muslims, Jews, homosexuals, and people of non-European ancestry, as well as graphic violence, has risen by more than 25% (http://www.theregister.co.uk/2004/05/10/hate_websites_flourish/).

Identity, Culture, and Technology Advances in communication technology lead us to think differently about ourselves and our **identity management.** In *The Saturated Self*, psychologist Kenneth Gergen describes the changes that occur as technology alters our patterns of communication. Gergen suggests that with the removal of traditional barriers to forming relationships—time and space—these technological advancements lead to **multiphrenia,** a splitting of the individual into many different selves. We are available for communication, via answering machine, fax, and e-mail, even when we're not physically present. Gergen (1991) writes:

identity management The way individuals make sense of their multiple images concerning the sense of self in different social contexts.

multiphrenia The splitting of the individual psychologically into multiple selves.

> *The relatively coherent and unified sense of self inherent in a traditional culture gives way to manifold and competing potentials. A multiphrenic condition emerges in which one swims in ever-shifting, concatenating, and contentious currents of*

> *being. One bears the burden of an increasing array of oughts, of self-doubts and irrationalities. (p. 80)*

Identity on the Internet not only is potentially fragmented but also involves more choice and management issues than in face-to-face interaction. As noted previously, many of the identity cues individuals use to figure out how to communicate with others—such as age, gender, and ethnicity—are filtered out on the Internet. For instance, when you send an e-mail, you can choose whether to reveal certain aspects of your identity. The recipients won't know if you are male or female, young or old, and so on—unless you tell them. The same is true for chat room participation. You can choose which aspects, if any, of your identity you want to reveal. In fact, you can even give false information about your identity.

identity tourism A concept that refers to people taking on the identities of other races, genders, classes, or sexual orientations for recreational purposes.

This capability has resulted in the opportunity for **identity tourism**—taking on the identities of other races, gender, classes, or sexual orientations for recreational purposes. And some online contexts (e.g., virtual games like *Dungeons and Dragons*) *require* users to take on new identities. How is this related to intercultural communication? One of the oft-touted skills of intercultural communication is empathy, the ability to understand what it's like to "walk in someone's shoes." Communication technology now affords an opportunity to do this—virtually. Thus, for instance, by taking on the virtual identity of a male, by participating in male-only online discussions, females might come to understand better what it feels like to be a male (Danet, 1999). The same might be true for other identities as well.

Although identity tourism provides intriguing possibilities for improving intercultural understanding, it also raises some important ethical questions. In one celebrated example, a male psychiatrist participated in online discussions as a disabled female. Ostensibly, he did so because he wanted to understand something of what it felt like to be a woman and to be disabled. The project backfired, however, as other chat room participants responded to him as a woman and, over time, even fell in love with him. Ultimately, many of the women suffered severe psychological problems as a result of their experiences with him (Turkle, 1995).

The idea of identity tourism may seem somewhat scary, but the same lack of nonverbal cues can result in less prejudice and stereotyping in mediated intercultural interaction. Some of these same nonverbal cues that are filtered out (indicators of age, gender, ethnicity, race) are often the basis for stereotyping and prejudice in initial interactions. When these cues are absent, communication may be more open because people cannot use the information to form impressions that often negatively impact communication (Carter, 2004).

Access to Communication Technology

As we've seen, technology plays a huge role in our everyday lives and often has a lot to do with our success as students and professionals. What would you do if you had no access to communication technology? If you were not able to text-message your friends or could not use your cell phone? Could not e-mail your family? How might you feel in our technology-dominated world? Although communication technologies are a fact of life for millions of people around the

world, lack of access to these technologies is a reality for many people. Consider that

- As of 2007 only 47% of Americans have a broadband Internet connection at home. Only 15% of people with a household income of under $30,000 per year have broadband at home.
- The rates of broadband adoption in rural areas trail those in urban areas by about two years, meaning that the 2005 rate of broadband use in rural areas equates to the 2003 rate of use in cities.
- Even when education and income are the same, blacks and Latinos are less likely to have broadband access than whites.

Even larger inequalities exist outside the United States:

- Africa contains over 14% of the world's population, but just 3% of the world's Internet users, while North America contains only 5% of the world's population, but accounts for 17.5% of the world's Internet users.
- There are more Internet users in Germany than there are in the entire continent of Africa.
- The United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the United Kingdom account for less than 20% of the world's population but "own" 80% of Internet hosts and most traffic.

Source: From http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Broadband%202007.pdf and http://www.allaboutmarketresearch.com/articles/art006.htm.

These inequities are called the "digital divide" and have enormous implications for intercultural communication. In the global information society, information is an important commodity. Everybody needs it to function. This ability is especially important in an increasingly "networked" society. It is easy to see how without these skills and knowledge one can feel marginalized and disconnected from the center of society (Rojas, Straubhaar, Roychowdhury, & Okur, 2004; van Dijk, 2004).

The implications for intercultural communication are enormous. How do people relate to each other when one is information technology rich and the other is not? When there is increasing use of English on the Internet, what happens to those who don't speak English? Can this lead to resentment? Will the increase in communication technology lead to increasing gaps between haves and have-nots? To more misunderstandings?

Recent communication technology has impacted our lives in ways our grandparents could not have imagined and requires that we reexamine even our most basic conceptions of self, others, and culture. As Sherry Turkle (1995) observes, once we take virtuality seriously as a way of life, we need a new language for talking about the simplest things. Each individual must ask: What is the nature of my relationships? What are the limits of my responsibilities? And even more importantly: Who and what am I? What is the connection between my physical and virtual bodies? And is it different in different cyberspaces? . . . What kind of society or societies are we creating, "both on and off the screen"

(p. 231)? We might also examine our own technological use: Who are we in contact with? People who are like ourselves? People who are different? Do we use technology to increase our contact with and understanding of other cultures or merely to hang out with people who are like us? What does this say about us and our identities?

THE PEACE IMPERATIVE

The bottom line seems to be this: Can individuals of different genders, ages, ethnicities, races, languages, socioeconomic statuses, and cultural backgrounds coexist on this planet? (See Figure 1-3.) Both the history of humankind and recent world events lead us not to be very optimistic on this point. And this imperative is even more evident after the events of September 11, 2001. Contact among different cultural groups—from the earliest civilizations until today—often has led to disharmony. For example, consider the ethnic/religious strife between Muslims and the Western world; the ethnic struggles in Bosnia and the former Soviet Union; the war between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda (Africa); the continued unrest in the Middle East; and the racial and ethnic struggles and tensions in neighborhoods in Boston, Los Angeles, and other U.S. cities.

colonialism (1) The system by which groups with diverse languages, cultures, religions, and identities were united to form one state, usually by a European power; (2) the system by which a country maintains power over other countries or groups of people to exploit them economically, politically, and culturally.

Some of these conflicts are tied to histories of **colonialism** around the world, whereby European powers lumped diverse groups—differing in language, culture, religion, or identity—together as one state. For example, the division of Pakistan and India was imposed by the British; eventually, East Pakistan declared its independence to become Bangladesh. Nevertheless, ethnic and religious differences in some areas of India and Pakistan continue to cause unrest. And the acquisition of nuclear weapons by both India and Pakistan makes these antagonisms of increasing concern. The tremendous diversity—and accompanying antagonisms—within many former colonies must be understood in the context of histories of colonialism.

Some of the conflicts are also tied to economic disparities and influenced by U.S. technology and media. Many people in the United States see these influences as beneficial, but they also stimulate resistance. Communication scholar Fernando Delgado (2002) explains:

> *Such cultural dominance, though celebrated at home, can spark intercultural conflicts because it inhibits the development of other nations' indigenous popular culture products, stunts their economic development and foists U.S. values and perspectives on other cultures. These effects, in turn, often lead to resentment and conflict. (p. 353)*

For example, according to many Canadians, a Canadian cultural identity is almost impossible because of the dominance of U.S. media. This type of cultural domination is very complex. Delgado recalls that he noticed anti-American sentiments in graffiti, newspapers, and TV programs during a recent

FIGURE 1-3 This Iraqi boy looks at shoes and clothes of victims of a car bomb explosion in Baghdad on March 1, 2006. The causes of this violence stem from long histories of intercultural conflict and are likely to influence intercultural relations in the future. (© *Akram Saleh/Getty*)

trip to Europe, but that he also saw U.S. influence everywhere—in music, television, film, cars, fast food, and fashion. He notes that "resentment, frustration, and disdain among the locals coexisted with an amazement at the penetration of U.S. popular culture" (p. 355).

Some of the conflicts have roots in past foreign policies. For example, the attacks in September 2001 were partly related to the confusing and shifting alliances among the United States, Afghanistan, and Arab and Muslim countries. In Afghanistan in the early 1990s, the Taliban seized power in response to the destructive rule of the Northern Alliance, a loose coalition of warlords. The United States had supported the Taliban in the fight against Soviet aggression in the late 1980s and had promised aid in rebuilding their country after the hostilities were over. However, with the withdrawal of Soviet forces and the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States wasn't as concerned about fulfilling its promises to the Afghan nation, leaving the Afghan people at the mercy of the Taliban. In addition, U.S. foreign policies toward many Arab countries in the last half century, coupled with open support for Israel, have caused widespread resentment (Friedman, 2002). Although there is no simple explanation for why terrorists attacked the United States, the attacks clearly did not happen

POINT *of* VIEW

CHINA CHOPS NIKE AD

The U.S. sportswear firm Nike has apologized for running a commercial in China which has been banned by popular demand for offending the country's national dignity.

The 90-second advertisement was meant to combine Kill Bill*–style martial arts with sassy basketball bravado. U.S. National Basketball Association star LeBron James is shown running rings around the animated figure of a wizened and bearded kung fu master, who resembles the martial arts teacher from Quentin Tarantino's latest movie.*

In the commercial, the American athlete also gets the better of two women in traditional Chinese attire, and a pair of dragons—considered to be a symbol of China.

In a sign of the growing influence of internet opinion, the government has pulled the "Chamber of Fear" advertisement off the airwaves, after protests in online chat rooms overturned the initial approval by state censors.

According to the U.S. company, the commercial was designed by its advertising agent, Wieden and Kennedy, to encourage teenagers to overcome temptation, envy, complacency and self-doubt. But it has only managed to stir up irritation in China.

The state administration for radio, television and film posted a statement saying that Nike had violated the condition that all advertisements in China should uphold national dignity.

"This ad shows Chinese characters losing again and again. It makes our country look helpless against America," said one chat room contributor.

Faced with the loss of business from a market in which its sales have nearly doubled in the past year, Nike meekly accepted the government's decision.

"We had no intention of hurting the emotions of Chinese consumers," the company said in a statement.

"We place much attention on the Chinese market and there was a lot of careful consideration before launching the advertisement," they said.

Source: From J. Watts, "China Chops Nike Ad; Multinational Apologizes After Outcry," *The Guardian* (London), December 8, 2004, p. 15.

in a vacuum. They need to be understood in historical, political, religious, and economic contexts.

It would be naive to assume that simply understanding the issues of intercultural communication would end war and intercultural conflict, but these problems do underscore the need for individuals to learn more about social groups other than their own. (See Figure 1-4.) Ultimately, people, and not countries,

FIGURE 1-4 This Peace Corps volunteer, Ian Derk, shares a meal with his host family in Morocco. Experiencing different cuisines and customs can also help you learn a lot about yourself and the complex world you live in. (© *Chor Sokunthea/Reuters/Corbis*)

negotiate and sign peace treaties. An example of how individual communication styles may influence political outcomes can be seen in the negotiations between Iraqi president Saddam Hussein and representatives of the United States and the United Nations just prior to the Gulf War, in 1990. Many Middle East experts assumed that Hussein was not ready to fight, that he was merely bluffing, using an Arabic style of communication. This style emphasizes the importance of animation, exaggeration, and conversational form over content (Feghali, 1997). Communication specialists note that in conflict situations Arab speakers may threaten the life and property of their opponents but have no intention of actually carrying out the threats. Rather, Arab speakers use threats to buy time and intimidate their opponents. Thus, declaratory statements by U.S. leaders, such as "We will find the cancer and cut it out," seemed mundane and unintimidating to Arab listeners. Verbal exchanges, regardless of the different speech styles, often take the place of physical violence (Griefat & Katriel, 1989).

However, we always need to consider the relationship between individual and societal forces in studying intercultural communication. Although communication on the interpersonal level is important, we must remember that individuals often are born into and are caught up in conflicts that they neither started nor chose.

POINT *of* VIEW

This writer decries a certain kind of intercultural learning—the learning that some study-abroad students pursue—whereby people in other countries are objectified and viewed as exotic and strange. The real problem arises when these students are hired to write television commercials and to present ideas about other cultures.

> *One type of commercial model shows us exotic humans in all their tribal finery, but, in a multicultural twist, they—Masai warriors, Sicilian matrons, Tibetan monks, Irish fishermen—are revealed as strangely prescient consumers with a quirky knowledge of luxury cars or Internet stock trading. In one commercial, we witness an Inuit elder teaching his grandson about tracking by identifying marks in the snow. "That," he says, "is a caribou." Then, after a pause, during which the wise man stares at the snow, he reverentially intones the single word "Audi." From ads like those, astute students learn that foreigners are obsessed with us—our commodities and displays. What we may learn from them pales in comparison with the glories that they see in our consumer lifestyle.*
>
> *Other commercials reduce distant lands to images of animals or nature and imply that nature can be thoroughly dominated by SUVs or swaggering, extreme-sports youths. Athletes and Nissan Pathfinders fight bulls in a ring, giant outdoorsmen tap the miniaturized Rockies, a hiker butts heads with a bighorn sheep. And, of course, sophisticated viewers know that all those animals are the creation of technology.*
>
> *In one commercial, a driver—insulated in his fully self-sufficient cocoon—is able to program both the road and the various beautiful and exotic settings it passes through. Not only is the technologically empowered American greater than nature, we create nature to suit our whims. There is no outside world anymore, no dark places of mystery, yet to be seen. Our SUVs do not travel to an unknown world so much as create different options from a well-known list. Television's emphasis is on how the actor—whether a contestant on a reality-TV show or the driver in a car ad—is seen and manipulates how she is seen. Even when outsiders exist, everyone is looking at us.*
>
> *When a promotional piece for the reality-TV show* The Amazing Race *shows an American woman in a clearly foreign space—perhaps India—she*

THE ETHICAL IMPERATIVE

ethics Principles of conduct that help govern behaviors of individuals and groups.

Living in an intercultural world presents ethical challenges as well. **Ethics** may be thought of as principles of conduct that help govern the behavior of individuals and groups. These principles often arise from communities' consensus on what is good and bad behavior. Cultural values tell us what is "good" and what "ought" to be good. Ethical judgments focus more on the degrees of rightness

is not troubled, confused or interested in her environment. Instead she strips down to a bikini emblazoned with a U.S. flag to get directions to the next challenge from a bug-eyed and eager native. "Will I wear this if it helps me get home?" she says. "Hell, yeah!" The young woman clearly did not travel to broaden her horizons. For her, India becomes, as much as Salt Lake City or Kandahar, a place for aggressive performance of her American identity—unwrapping herself in the flag, so to speak.

We now are the world, to be looked at, admired, or despised; what is important about the activity of others is their response to our display. . . . [Study-abroad students] talk about interactions with outsiders only in vague abstractions, while expostulating brilliantly about the nuances of American students' interactions with one another. The few individuals who left their peers to engage the outside world explained that move as an individual rejection of the group and still found it easier to discuss their fellow students than the generically defined "friends" they met at bars.

One young American who traveled to Guatemala bragged that "I have a surprising ability to relate to almost everyone," but "everyone" turned out to mean members of preconceived categories of human-rights workers, Indians, and children, whom she described as objects of more first-person sentences. She specifically excluded less exotic, fast-talking city folk who were "just different" and not worth mentioning.

Students return from study-abroad programs having seen the world, but the world they return to tell tales about is more often than not the world they already knew, the imaginary world of globalized, postmodern capitalism where everything is already known, everyone speaks the same language, and the outside world keeps its eyes on those of us who come from the center.

. . . we should avoid pre- and post-travel orientation sessions that focus on group dynamics and individual growth. Instead, those sessions could be used as opportunities for students to learn how to question the way that we tell stories about our travels, and to discover for themselves how those stories share features with commercials about men who play football with lions and reality shows where contestants dare each other to swallow centipedes.

Source: From B. Feinberg, "What Students Don't Learn Abroad," *The Chronicle Review*, May 2, 2000, p. B20.

and wrongness in human behavior than do cultural values (Johannesen, 1990).

Some judgments are stated very explicitly. For example, the Ten Commandments teach that it is wrong to steal, tell a lie, commit murder, and so on. Many other identifiable principles of conduct that arise from our cultural experience may be less explicit—for instance, that people should be treated equally and should work hard. Several issues come to mind in a discussion of ethics in intercultural communication. For example, what happens when two ethical systems collide?

Although an individual may want to "do the right thing" to contribute to a better society, it is not always easy to know what is "right" in specific situations. Ethical principles are often culture bound, and intercultural conflicts arise from various notions of what is ethical behavior.

One common cross-cultural ethical dilemma involves standards of conducting business in multinational corporations. The U.S. Congress and the Securities and Exchange Commission consider it unethical to make payments to government officials of other countries to promote trade. (Essentially, such payments smack of bribery.) However, in many countries, like China, government officials are paid in this informal way instead of being supported by taxes (Ambler & Witzel, 2000). What, then, is ethical behavior for personnel in multinational subsidiaries?

Relativity Versus Universality

In this book, we stress the relativity of cultural behavior—that no cultural pattern is inherently right or wrong. So, is there any universality in ethics? Are any cultural behaviors always right or always wrong? The answers depend on one's perspective. A universalist might try, for example, to identify acts and conditions that most societies think of as wrong, such as murder, theft, or treason. Someone who takes an extreme universalist position would insist that cultural differences are only superficial, that fundamental notions of right and wrong are universal. Some religions take universal positions—for example, that the Ten Commandments are a universal code of behavior. But Christian groups often disagree about the universality of the Bible. For example, are the teachings of the New Testament mainly guidelines for the Christians of Jesus's time, or can they be applied to Christians in the 21st century? These are difficult issues for many people searching for ethical guidelines (Johannesen, 1990). The philosopher Immanuel Kant (1949) believed in the universality of moral laws. His well-known "categorical imperative" states that people should act only on maxims that apply universally, to *all* individuals.

The extreme relativist position holds that any cultural behavior can be judged only within the cultural context in which it occurs. This means that only those members of a community can truly judge the ethics of their own members. According to communication scholar William S. Howell (1982),

> *The environment, the situation, the timing of an interaction, human relationships, all affect the way ethical standards are applied. . . . The concept of universal ethics, standards of goodness that apply to everyone, everywhere, and at all times, is the sort of myth people struggle to hold onto. (pp. 182, 187)*

And yet, to accept a completely relativistic position seems to tacitly accept the horrors of Nazi Germany, South African apartheid, or U.S. slavery. In each case, the larger community developed cultural beliefs that supported persecution and discrimination in such extreme forms that worldwide condemnation ultimately resulted (Hall, 1997, p. 23).

Philosophers and anthropologists have struggled to develop ethical guidelines that seem universally applicable but that also recognize the tremendous cultural variability in the world. And many ethical relativists appeal to more natural, humanitarian principles. This more moderate position assumes that

people can evaluate cultures without succumbing to ethnocentrism, that all individuals and cultural groups share a fundamental humanistic belief in the sanctity of the human spirit and the goodness of peace, and that people should respect the well-being of others (Kale, 1994).

Communication scholar Bradford J. Hall (1997) reminds us that relativistic and universalistic approaches to ethics should be viewed not as a dichotomy, but rather as a compound of universalism and relativism. All ethics systems involve a tension between the universal and the relative. So, although we recognize some universal will toward ethical principles, we may have to live with the tension of not being able to impose our "universal" ethic on others.

A recent suggestion for meeting the ethical imperative is to employ a **dialogical approach** (Evanoff, 2004). The dialogical approach emphasizes the importance of relationships and dialogues between individuals and communities in wrestling with ethical dilemmas. Communication scholars Stanley Deetz, Deborah Cohen, and Paige P. Edley (1997) suggest that even in international business contexts, a dialogical approach can work. As an example, they cite the ethical challenges that arise when a corporation relocates its operations overseas. Although this relocation may make good business sense, the move often has difficult personal and social (and therefore ethical) ramifications. The move may cause a wave of unemployment in the old location and raise issues of exploitation of the workforce and harm to the environment in the new location (especially where poverty is a problem).

dialogical approach Focuses on the importance of dialogue in developing and maintaining relationships between individuals and communities.

Deetz and colleagues (1997) suggest that moving from an owner/manager model to a dialogical stakeholder model can help clarify some of the ethical issues. The dialogical approach emphasizes the importance of the relationship and dialogue between the company and the various communities and stakeholders. They propose forums for discussion even while acknowledging that sometimes discussions and forums are used by management to suppress or diffuse conflict rather than to promote genuine debate for the sake of company improvement. In this case, a dialogical approach

> *does not rest in agreement or consensus but in the avoidance of the suppression of alternative conceptions and possibilities . . . the heterogeneity of the international community and the creative possibilities residing in intercultural communication provide possibilities that may have been overlooked in national cultures. (Deetz, et al., 1997, pp. 222–223)*

The study of intercultural communication not only provides insights into cultural patterns but also helps us address the ethical issues involved in intercultural interaction. Specifically we should be able to (1) judge what is ethical and unethical behavior given variations in cultural priorities, and (2) identify guidelines for ethical behavior in intercultural contexts in which ethics clash.

Being Ethical Students of Culture

Related to the issue of judging cultural patterns as ethical or unethical are the issues surrounding the study of culture. Part of learning about intercultural communication is learning about cultural patterns and cultural identities—our own

and others. There are three issues to address here: developing self-reflexivity, learning about others, and acquiring a sense of social justice.

self-reflexivity A process of learning to understand oneself and one's position in society.

Developing Self-Reflexivity In studying intercultural communication, it is vital to develop **self-reflexivity**—to understand ourselves and our position in society. In learning about other cultures and cultural practices, we often learn much about ourselves. Immigrants often comment that they never felt so much like someone of their own nationality until they left their homeland.

Think about it: Many cultural attitudes and ideas are instilled in you, but these can be difficult to unravel and identify. Knowing who you are is never simple; rather, it is an ongoing process that can never fully capture the ever-emerging person. Not only will you grow older but your intercultural experiences will change who you are and who you think you are. It is also important to reflect on your place in society. By recognizing the social categories to which you belong, and the implications of those categories, you will be in a better position to understand how to communicate. For example, being an undergraduate student positions you to communicate your ideas on specific subjects and in particular ways to various members of the faculty or staff at your school. You might want to communicate to the registrar your desire to change majors—this would be an appropriate topic to address to that person. But you would not be well positioned during an exam to communicate to your chemistry professor your problems with your girl- or boyfriend.

Learning About Others It is important to remember that the study of cultures is actually the study of other people. Never lose sight of the humanity at the core of the topic. Try not to observe people as if they are zoo animals. Communication scholar Bradford Hall (1997) cautions against using the "zoo approach" to studying culture:

> *When using such an approach we view the study of culture as if we were walking through a zoo admiring, gasping and chuckling at the various exotic animals we observe. One may discover amazing, interesting and valuable information by using such a perspective and even develop a real fondness for these exotic people, but miss the point that we are as culturally "caged" as others and that they are culturally as "free" as we are. (p. 14)*

Remember that you are studying real people who have real lives, and your conclusions about them may have very real consequences for them and for you. Cultural studies scholar Linda Alcoff (1991/1992) acknowledges the ethical issues involved when students of culture try to describe the cultural patterns of others; she recognizes the difficulty of speaking "for" and "about" others who have different lives. Instead, she suggests, students of culture should try to speak "with" and "to" others. Rather than merely describe others from a distance, it's better to engage others in a dialogue about their cultural realities.

Learn to listen to the voices of others, to cultivate experiential knowledge. Hearing about the experiences of people who are different from you can broaden

STUDENT VOICES

I have spent three years in the United States seeking an education. I am from Singapore, and I believe that in many ways both countries are similar. They are both multicultural. They both have a dominant culture. In the United States the dominant culture is white, and in Singapore it is Chinese.

Coming to the United States has taught me to be more aware of diversity. Even though in Singapore we are diverse, because I was part of the majority there, I didn't feel the need to increase my level of intercultural awareness. In the United States I became a minority, and that has made me feel the need to become more culturally competent.

—Jacqueline

your ways of viewing the world. Many differences—based on race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnicity, age, and so on—deeply affect people's everyday lives. Listening carefully as people relate their experiences and their ways of knowing will help you learn about the many aspects of intercultural communication.

Developing a Sense of Social Justice A final ethical issue involves the responsibility that comes with the acquisition of intercultural knowledge and insights—that this educational experience is not just transformative for the individual but should also benefit the larger society and other cultural groups in the increasingly interdependent world.

Everett Kleinjans (1975), an international educator, stresses that intercultural education differs from some other kinds of education: Although all education may be potentially transformative, learning as a result of intercultural contact is particularly so in that it deals with fundamental aspects of human behavior. Learning about intercultural communication sometimes calls into question the core of our basic assumptions about ourselves, our culture, and our worldviews and challenges existing and preferred beliefs, values, and patterns of behavior. Liliana, a Colombian student, describes such a transformation:

> *When I first came to the States to study and live I was surprised with all the diversity and different cultures I encountered. I realized I came from a country, society, school and group of friends with little diversity. During all the years I lived in Colombia I did not meet more than five people from other countries. Even at my school, there was little diversity—only two students of color among three thousand students. I realized that big difference when I was suddenly sharing a college classroom with students from all over the world, people of all colors and cultures. At the beginning it was difficult getting used to it because of the wide diversity, but I like and enjoy it now and I wish my family and friends could experience and learn as much as I have.*

As you learn about yourself and others as cultural beings, as you come to understand the larger economic, political, and historical contexts in which

interaction occurs, is there an ethical obligation to continue learning? We believe that as members of an increasingly interdependent global community, intercultural communication students have a responsibility to educate themselves, not just about interesting cultural differences but also about intercultural conflicts, the impacts of stereotyping and prejudice, and the larger systems that can oppress and deny basic human rights—and to apply this knowledge to the communities in which they live and interact.

What constitutes ethical and unethical applications of intercultural communication knowledge? One questionable practice involves people who study intercultural communication in order to proselytize others without their consent. (Some religious organizations conduct Bible study on college campuses for international students under the guise of English language lessons.) Another questionable practice is the behavior of cross-cultural consultants who misrepresent or exaggerate their ability to deal with complex issues of prejudice and racism in brief, one-shot training sessions (Paige & Martin, 1996).

A final questionable practice concerns research on the intercultural communication of U.S. minority groups. A common approach in the United States is for a white tenured faculty member to conduct such research employing graduate and undergraduate students from the minority groups being studied:

> *Minority students are sometimes used as a way to gain immediate access to the community of interest. These students go into communities and the (usually white) professors are spared the intense, time-consuming work of establishing relationships in the community. (Martin & Butler, 2001, p. 291)*

These students are then asked to report their findings to and interpret their community for the faculty member. Unfortunately, doing so can jeopardize their relationship to their community, which may be suspicious of the academic community. The faculty member publishes articles and reaps the tangible rewards of others' hard work—promotions, pay raises, and professional visibility. Meanwhile, the community and the students may receive little for their valuable contributions to this academic work.

We feel there is a concomitant responsibility that goes along with this intercultural knowledge: to work toward a more equitable and fair society and world. We want you to keep in mind this ethical issue as you study the various topics covered in this book. In the final chapter, we'll address this issue again with practical suggestions for meeting this ethical challenge.

INTERNET RESOURCES

www.intercultural.org/
This is the Web site of a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving intercultural communication. It contains a lot of valuable information aimed

at a broad audience, including businesses. The most interesting aspect of the Web site is that it is full of actual training materials used by intercultural practitioners in helping their clients develop a greater intercultural proficiency.

www.refintl.org/
This Web site explores the topic of refugees. Many people consider intercultural communication in the business setting, but intercultural communication due to refugee migrations is actually rather common. This site estimates that there are over 34 million refugees around the world. What special intercultural issues are present when considering refugees?

www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles/intercultural-communication-tips.html
This is a "quick-tip" guide to intercultural communication. There are some good tips on this page, like encouragement to reflect on the practices you engage in while communicating in an intercultural context. It is worth considering that this is the type of information many people use when engaging in intercultural business, etc. What types of information or analysis are missing from its list of tips?

SUMMARY

There are six reasons or imperatives for studying intercultural communication:

- The self-awareness imperative involves increasing understanding of our own location in larger social, political, and historical contexts.
- The demographic imperative includes the changing domestic and international migration—raising questions of class and religious diversity.
- The economic imperative highlights issues of globalization and the challenges for increased cultural understanding needed to reach the global market.
- The technological imperative gives us increasing information and increased contact with people who are similar and different from us. Increased use of communication technology also raises questions about identity and access to these technologies.
- The peace imperative involves working through issues of colonialism, economic disparities, and racial, ethnic, and religious differences.
- The ethical imperative calls for an understanding of the universalist, relativist, and dialogic approach to ethical issues.

Being an ethical student of culture involves developing self-reflexivity, learning about others, and developing a sense of social justice and responsibility.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do electronic means of communication (e-mail, the Internet, fax, and so on) differ from face-to-face interactions?
2. How do these communication technologies change intercultural communication interaction?
3. What are some of the potential challenges organizations face as they become more diverse?
4. Why is it important to think beyond ourselves as individuals in intercultural interaction?
5. How do economic situations affect intergroup relations?

Go to the self-quizzes on the Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/martinnakayama5 to further test your knowledge.

ACTIVITIES

1. *Family Tree.* Interview the oldest member of your family you can contact. Then answer the following questions:
   a. When did your ancestors come to the United States?
   b. Where did they come from?
   c. What were the reasons for their move? Did they come voluntarily?
   d. What language(s) did they speak?
   e. What difficulties did they encounter?
   f. Did they change their names? For what reasons?
   g. What were their occupations before they came, and what jobs did they take on their arrival?
   h. How has your family status changed through the generations?

   Compare your family experience with those of your classmates. Did most immigrants come for the same reasons? What are the differences in the various stories?

2. *Intercultural Encounter.* Describe and analyze a recent intercultural encounter. This may mean talking with someone of a different age, ethnicity, race, religion, and so on.
   a. Describe the encounter. What made it "intercultural"?
   b. Explain how you initially felt about the communication.
   c. Describe how you felt after the encounter, and explain why you think you felt as you did.
   d. Describe any challenges in trying to communicate. If there were no challenges, explain why you think it was so easy.
   e. Based on this experience, identify some characteristics that may be important for successful intercultural communication.

CHAPTER 3

CULTURE, COMMUNICATION, CONTEXT, AND POWER

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After you read this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Identify three approaches to culture.
2. Define communication.
3. Identify and describe nine cultural value orientations.
4. Describe how cultural values influence communication.
5. Understand how cultural values influence conflict behavior.
6. Describe how communication can reinforce cultural beliefs and behavior.
7. Explain how culture can function as resistance to dominant value systems.
8. Explain the relationship between communication and context.
9. Describe the characteristics of power.
10. Describe the relationship between communication and power.

In Chapter 2, we touched on the history of intercultural communication studies, examined three theoretical approaches, and outlined an integrated dialectical approach to intercultural communication. In this chapter, we continue our discussion of the dialectical approach and identify four interrelated components or building blocks in understanding intercultural communication: culture, communication, context, and power. As noted previously, culture and communication are the foreground and context and power form the backdrop against which we can understand intercultural communication. First, we define and describe culture and communication. Then we examine how these two components interact with issues of context and power to enhance our understanding of intercultural communication.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

Culture is often considered the core concept in intercultural communication. Intercultural communication studies often focus on how cultural groups differ from one another: Muslims differ from Christians; Japanese differ from U.S. Americans; men differ from women; environmentalists differ from conservationists; pro-lifers differ from pro-choicers; old differ from young, and on and on (Gudykunst, 2002).

Perhaps it is more helpful here to think of the similarities–differences dialectic in trying to understand intercultural communication. That is, we are all similar to *and* different from each other simultaneously. Humans, regardless of cultural backgrounds, engage in many of the same daily activities and have many of the same wants and desires. We all eat, sleep, love, pursue friendships and romantic relationships and want to be respected and loved by those who are important to us.

And yet some real differences exist between cultural groups. How we pursue these activities varies from culture to culture. Men and women often do not see the world in the same way. Old and young have different goals and dreams. Muslims and Christians have different beliefs, and the old adage "When in Rome do as the Romans do" implies that it is easy simply to adapt to different ways of thinking and behaving, yet anyone who has struggled to adapt to a new cultural situation knows that only the Romans are Romans and only they know how to be truly Romans. The challenge is to negotiate these differences and similarities with insight and skill. First, we need to examine what we mean by the term *culture*.

Culture Learned patterns of behavior and attitudes shared by a group of people.

Culture has been defined in many ways—from a pattern of perceptions that influence communication to a site of contestation and conflict. Because there are many acceptable definitions of culture, and because it is a complex concept, it is important to reflect on the centrality of culture in our own interactions. The late British writer Raymond Williams (1983) wrote that culture "is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (p. 89). And this very complexity indicates the many ways in which it influences intercultural communication (Williams, 1981). Culture is more than merely one aspect of the practice of intercultural communication. How we think about culture frames our ideas

In this essay, communication scholar Wen Shu Lee identifies different common uses of the term *culture* and then describes how each definition serves particular interests. She also defends her preferred choice, the sixth definition.

1. Culture = unique human efforts (as different from nature and biology). For example, "*Culture* is the bulwark against the ravages of nature."
2. Culture = refinement, mannerism (as different from things that are crude, vulgar, and unrefined). For example, "Look at the way in which he chows down his food. He has no *culture* at all."
3. Culture = civilization (as different from backward barbaric people). For example, "In countries where darkness reigns and people are wanting in *culture*, it is our mandate to civilize and Christianize those poor souls."
4. Culture = shared language, beliefs, values (as different from language beliefs and values that are not shared; dissenting voices; and voices of the "other"). For example, "We come from the same *culture*, we speak the same language, and we share the same tradition."
5. Culture = dominant or hegemonic culture (as different from marginal cultures). For example, "It is the *culture* of the ruling class that determines what is moral and what is deviant." [This definition is a more charged version of definitions 2, 3, and 4 through the addition of power consciousness.]
6. Culture = the shifting tensions between the shared and the unshared (as different from shared or unshared things). For example, "American *culture* has changed from master/slave, to white only/black only, to antiwar and black power, to affirmative action/multiculturalism and political correctness, to transnational capital and anti-sweatshop campaigns."

Each of these definitions privileges certain interests. Definition 2 privileges high culture and leaves out popular culture. . . . Definition 3 privileges nations that are/were imperialistic, colonizing. . . . Definition 4 privileges a "universal and representative" view of a society, but such a view often represents only a specific powerful group and silences other groups that do not readily share this view. Definition 5 privileges the interaction of the culture authorized by the dominant group/sector/nation—more politically explicit than definitions 2, 3, and 4. Definition 6 is the one I like the most. It is more of a meta view of cultures. It focuses on the "links" between "the shared" and the "little shared." But the sharedness, *the* unsharedness, *and their* links *remain not only situated but also unstable, shifting, and contested.*

Source: From Collier, Hegde, Lee, Nakayama, and Yep, "Dialogue on the Edges: Ferment in Communication and Culture." In M. J. Collier et al. (Eds.), *Transforming Communication About Culture* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002), pp. 229–230.

TABLE 3-1 THREE PERSPECTIVES ON DEFINING CULTURE

Social Science	Interpretive	Critical
Culture is:		
Learned and shared	Learned and shared	Heterogeneous, dynamic
Patterns of perception	Contextual symbolic meanings	Site of contested meanings
	Involves emotion	
The relationship between culture and communication:		
Culture influences communication.	Culture influences communication.	Communication reshapes culture.
	Communication reinforces culture.	

Source: Adapted from J. N. Martin and T. K. Nakayama, "Thinking Dialectically About Culture and Communication," *Communication Theory, 9* (1999): 5.

and perceptions. For example, if we think that culture is defined by nation-states, then communication between a Japanese and an Italian would be intercultural communication because Japan and Italy are different nation-states. However, according to this definition, an encounter between an Asian American from North Carolina and an African American from California would not be intercultural because North Carolina and California are not different nation-states.

We do not advocate a singular definition of culture because any one definition is too restrictive (Baldwin & Lindsley, 1994). A dialectical approach suggests that different definitions offer more flexibility in approaching the topic. We believe that the best approach to understanding the complexities of intercultural communication is to view the concept of culture from different perspectives (see Table 3-1).

By and large, social science researchers focus not on culture per se but on the *influence* of culture on communication. In other words, such researchers concern themselves with communication differences that result from culture. They pay little attention to how we conceptualize culture or how we see its functions. In contrast, interpretive researchers focus more on how cultural contexts influence communication. Critical researchers, for their part, often view communication—and the power to communicate—as instrumental in reshaping culture. They see culture as the way that people participate in or resist society's structure.

Although research studies help us understand different aspects of intercultural communication, it is important to investigate how we think about culture, not simply as researchers but as practitioners as well. We therefore broaden our scope to consider different views of culture, especially in terms of how they influence intercultural communication.

Social Science Definitions: Culture as Learned, Group-Related Perceptions

Communication scholars from the social science paradigm, influenced by research in psychology, view culture as a set of learned, group-related perceptions (B. Hall, 1992). Geert Hofstede (1984), a noted social psychologist, defines culture as "the programming of the mind" and explains his notion of culture in terms of a computer program:

> *Every person carries within him or herself patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting which were learned throughout [his or her] lifetime. Much of [these patterns are] acquired in early childhood, because at that time a person is most susceptible to learning and assimilating. (p. 4)*

Hofstede goes on to describe how these patterns are developed through interactions in the social environment and with various groups of individuals—first in the family and neighborhood, then at school and in youth groups, then at college, and so on. Culture becomes a collective experience because it is shared with people who live in and experience the same social environments.

To understand this notion of the collective programming of the mind, Hofstede and other scholars studied organizational behavior at various locations of a multinational corporation; this study is discussed in detail later in the chapter. Social scientists also have emphasized the role of perception in cultural patterns. They contend that cultural patterns of thought and meaning influence our perceptual processes, which, in turn, influence our behavior:

> *Culture is defined as a pattern of learned, group-related perception—including both verbal and nonverbal language attitudes, values, belief system, disbelief systems, and behavior. (Singer, 1987, p. 34)*

Interpretive Definitions: Culture as Contextual Symbolic Patterns of Meaning, Involving Emotions

Interpretive scholars, influenced by anthropological studies, also view culture as shared and learned; however, they tend to focus on contextual patterns of communication behavior, rather than on group-related perceptions. Many interpretive scholars borrow anthropologist Clifford Geertz's definition of culture. According to Geertz (1973), culture denotes

> *an historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men (sic) communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life. (p. 89)*

One of the most common examples of interpretive scholarship is **ethnography of communication;** these scholars look for symbolic meaning of verbal and nonverbal activities in an attempt to understand patterns and rules of communication. This area of study defines cultural groups rather broadly—for example, as talk show participants or Vietnam War veterans.

ethnography of communication A specialized area of study within communication. Taking an interpretive perspective, scholars analyze verbal and nonverbal activities that have symbolic significance for the members of cultural groups to understand the rules and patterns followed by the groups. (See **interpretive approach** on page 59.)

Ethnography of communication scholar Donal Carbaugh (1988) suggests that it is best to reserve the concept of culture for patterns of symbolic action and meaning that are deeply felt, commonly intelligible, and widely accessible. Patterns that are deeply felt are sensed collectively by members of the cultural group. Gathering around the coffee machine at work every morning, for example, could be a cultural pattern, but only if the activity holds **symbolic significance** or evokes feelings that extend beyond itself. Then the activity more completely exemplifies a cultural pattern. Suppose that gathering around the coffee machine each morning symbolizes teamwork or the desire to interact with colleagues. To qualify as a cultural pattern, the activity must have the same symbolic significance for all members of the group; they must all find the activity meaningful in more or less the same way. Further, all participants must have access to the pattern of action. This does not mean that they must all use the pattern; it only means the pattern is available to them.

symbolic significance
The importance or meaning that most members of a cultural group attach to a communication activity.

Communication theorist Gerry Philipsen extends Carbaugh's notion of culture by emphasizing that these patterns must endure over time, passed along from person to person. Philipsen (1992) writes,

> *Culture . . . refers to a socially constructed and historically transmitted pattern of symbols, meaning, premises, and rules. . . . A cultural code of speaking, then, consists of a socially constructed and historically transmitted system of symbols and meanings pertaining to communication—for instance, symbols "Lithuanian" or "communication" and their attendant definitions; beliefs about spoken actions (that a man who uses speech to discipline boys is not a real man); and rules for using speech (that a father should not interrupt his daughter at the dinner table). (pp. 7–8)*

These definitions of culture suggested by Philipsen are influenced by communication ethnographer Dell Hymes's (1972) framework for studying naturally occurring speech in depth and in context. The framework comprises eight elements: scene, participant, end, act sequence, key, instrumentality, norm, and genre. In this sequence, the terms form the acronym *SPEAKING*. The *S*cene is the setting of the communication event. The *P*articipants are the people who perform or enact the event. The *E*nd is the goal of the participants in conversation. The *A*ct sequence is the order of phrases during the enactment. The *K*ey is the tone of the conversation. The channel of communication is the *I*nstrumentality. The *N*orms, as you know, are the rules that people follow. And *G*enre is the type or category of talk. By analyzing speech using this descriptive framework, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the rules and patterns followed in any given speech community. Later in this chapter, we'll provide an example of how the framework can be used to explore cultural communication in context.

Culture is not only experienced as perceptions and values, and contextual, but the concept of culture also involves emotions. When we are in our own cultural surroundings we *feel* a sense of familiarity and a certain level of comfort in the space, behavior and actions of others. We might characterize this feeling as a kind of **embodied ethnocentrism,** which is normal (Bennett & Castiglioni, 2004). (Later on we'll discuss the negative side of ethnocentrism.) This aspect of culture has implications for understanding adaptation to other cultural norms

embodied ethnocentrism
Feeling comfortable and familiar in the spaces, behaviors, and actions of others in our own cultural surroundings.

POINT *of* VIEW

Tiger Woods' media statement on his race/ethnicity:

The purpose of this statement is to explain my heritage for the benefit of members of the media who may be seeing me play for the first time. It is the final and only comment I will make regarding the issue.

My parents have taught me to always be proud of my ethnic background. Please rest assured that is, and always will be, the case—past, present, and future.

The media has portrayed me as African-American; sometimes, Asian. In fact, I am both. Yes, I am the product of two great cultures, one African-American and the other Asian. On my father's side, I am African-American. On my mother's side, I am Thai. Truthfully, I feel very fortunate, and EQUALLY PROUD, to be both African-American and Asian! The critical and fundamental point is that ethnic background and/or composition should NOT make a difference. It does NOT make a difference to me. The bottom line is that I am an American . . . and proud of it!

That is who I am and what I am. Now, with your cooperation, I hope I can just be a golfer and a human being.
Signed,
TIGER WOODS

http://www.geocities.com/Colosseum/2396/tigerrace.html

and spaces. That is, the stronger your identification with a particular space/cultural situation, the more difficult it might be to change spaces without experiencing a lot of discomfort—actual psychological and physiological changes. For example, students studying in France described their feelings in coping with the French language. Their self-esteem dropped and they became very self-conscious. Their whole bodies were entrenched in this effort of trying to communicate in French; it was a laborious and involved process that was connected to all aspects of themselves—a feeling of being out of their cultural comfort zone (Kristjánsdóttir, 2009). We should not underestimate the importance of culture in providing us a feeling of familiarity and comfort.

Although the notion of culture as shared, learned group patterns of perception or symbolic behavior has long been the standard in a variety of disciplines, more and more people are beginning to question its utility. They question how much of "culture" is truly shared. For example, one colleague reports that in a class discussion about the definition of culture in which most students were giving the usual definitions, "one student almost indignantly jumped into our discussion and said, 'Do we really have a common culture?'" She then followed with the question "Whose version of a shared and common culture are we talking about?" (Collier, Hegde, Lee, Nakayama, & Yep, 2002, p. 269). Indeed, these are important questions, and so the next section describes an alternative approach to

defining culture. (For a challenge to common notions of a "shared" U.S. culture, take the "Test of U.S. Cultural Knowledge" on pages 92–93.)

Critical Definitions: Culture as Heterogeneous, Dynamic, and a Contested Zone

A more recent approach to culture, influenced by cultural studies scholarship, emphasizes the heterogeneity of cultural groups and the often conflictual nature of cultural boundaries. For example, what is the "U.S. American culture"? Is there *an* American culture? How many perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs and behaviors are actually shared among the many diverse people living in the United States? Critical scholars suggest that in emphasizing only the shared aspects of culture, we gloss over the many interesting differences among U.S. Americans. Further, they emphasize that cultural boundaries are often contested and not easily agreed upon. For example, increasing numbers of people like Tiger Woods have multicultural identities. He considers himself Cablinasian—Caucasian, black, Indian, and Asian—because of his racially diverse background. He resists the many efforts by some to pigeonhole his race/ethnicity or to focus more on his cultural background than his achievements as a golfer, as shown in the "Point of View" box on page 89.

This notion of culture as heterogeneous and often conflictual originated with British cultural studies scholars in the 1960s. Cultural studies scholars were fiercely interdisciplinary and dedicated to understanding the richness, complexity, and relevance of cultural phenomena in the lives of ordinary people. This desire to make academic work relevant to everyday life resonated in other fields. Most people, in fact, want to find the connections between what they learn in the classroom and what is occurring in contemporary society. In any case, this movement led to the reconfiguration of the role of the university in society. Cultural studies soon spread from Britain to Australia, Latin America, and other parts of the world. Because of differing cultural and political situations, the specific construction of cultural studies differs from place to place. In the United States, for instance, cultural studies developed mainly within departments of communication (Grossberg, 1993).

You may sense that the concept of culture that emerged from this area of inquiry differs markedly from the concept expressed in social science or even interpretive research. However, it is in agreement with concepts found in recent work in anthropology. Many anthropologists have criticized research that categorizes people and characterizes cultural patterns as set, unchanging, and unconnected to issues of gender, class, and history (Keesing, 1994). Recent anthropological research sees cultural processes as dynamic and fluid "organizations of diversity" that extend across national and regional borders within contexts of history and power (Hannerz, 1996). Communication scholars who embrace the critical notions encourage us to

> *move beyond hegemonic definition of culture as "shared and transmitted from generation to generation" that assumes that we all experience a "common culture" and . . . is passed down from one generation to the next in a linear and seemingly static fashion. . . . [T]his is a dangerous myth . . . that works in invisible yet*

FIGURE 3-1 You probably notice many differences among the people in this crowd, despite not having communicated with them. You are likely to encounter people who are culturally different from you in everyday life. What are some assumptions you might hold that would influence your communication with them? (© *Digital Vision/PunchStock*)

> *extremely powerful ways to suppress and erase marginalized voices and experiences. (Gust Yep, in Collier et al., 2002, p. 231)*

Viewing culture as a contested site or zone helps us understand the struggles of various groups—Native Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, African Americans, Latinos/as, women, gays and lesbians, working-class people, and so on—as they attempt to negotiate their relationships and promote their well-being within U.S. society. By studying the communication that springs from these ongoing struggles, we can better understand several intercultural concerns. Consider, for example, Proposition 227 in California, passed by voters in 1998, which eliminated public funding for bilingual education. The controversy surrounding the passage of this proposition illustrates the concerns of many different cultural groups. Similar debates surrounded the prior passage of Propositions 187 and 209 in California.

Viewing culture as a contested site opens up new ways of thinking about intercultural communication. After all, the individuals in a given culture are not identical, which suggests that any culture is replete with cultural struggles. Thus, when we use terms like *Chinese culture* and *French culture*, we gloss over the heterogeneity, the diversity, that resides in that culture. Yet the ways in which various cultures are heterogeneous are not the same elsewhere as in the United States, which means it would be a mistake to map our structure of differences onto other cultures. (See Figure 3-1.) How sexuality, ethnicity, gender, and class

TEST OF U.S. CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

This test examines your knowledge of many of the cultures that comprise the contemporary United States.

1. *Lagniappe* is a term used in southern Louisiana for:
   a. Hurricanes
   b. Something free or sometimes a small gift given by a store owner to a customer after a purchase
   c. Inviting someone over for a meal
   d. Helping a friend with home remodeling or yard work
2. What is the name of the dish that features black-eyed peas and rice (although sometimes collards, ham hocks, stewed tomatoes, or other items) and is served in the South, especially on New Year's Day?
   a. Chitlings
   b. Jowls
   c. Hoppin' John
   d. Red rice
3. A very sweet pie made from molasses that originated with the Pennsylvania Dutch:
   a. Mincemeat pie
   b. Sugar pie
   c. Shoofly pie
   d. Lancaster pie
4. Which of the following is *not* the name of a Native American tribe?
   a. Seminole
   b. Apache
   c. Arapaho
   d. Illini
5. The month of Ramadan, a month of fasting for Muslims, ends with which holiday?
   a. Eid ul-Fitr
   b. Allahu Akbar
   c. Takbir
   d. Abu Bakr
6. On June 12 every year, some U.S. Americans celebrate "Loving Day" to commemorate:
   a. Your legal right to love someone of another race
   b. Your legal right to love someone of the same sex
   c. Your legal right to be a single parent
   d. Your legal right to get a divorce

7. The celebration of Buddha's birthday is not held on Christmas, but instead on:
   a. Fourth of July
   b. July 14
   c. Asian Lunar New Year's Day
   d. Hanamatsuri
8. Sometimes viewed as a Scandinavian tortilla, these potato flatcakes are often sold in areas with high Scandinavian American populations:
   a. Lefse
   b. Lutefisk
   c. Aquavit
   d. Fiskepudding
9. This traditional Mexican soup is made mostly from tripe, hominy, and chili:
   a. Tortilla soup
   b. Tomatillo
   c. Chorizo soup
   d. Menudo
10. Like a coconut pudding, this food comes from Hawaii:
    a. Lomi lomi
    b. Poke
    c. Haupia
    d. Kalua

Answers can be found on page 115.

function in other cultures is not necessarily the same as, or even similar to, their function in the United States. By viewing any culture as a contested zone or site of struggle, we can understand the complexities of that culture; we can become more sensitive to how people in that culture live.

Our dialectical approach, though, enables us to accept and see the interrelatedness of these different views. Culture is at once a shared and a learned pattern of beliefs and perceptions that are mutually intelligible and widely accessible. It is also a site of struggle for contested meanings. A dialectic perspective can help facilitate discussions on conflicting cultural notions (e.g., how to reconcile U.S. patriotism and instances of anti-Americanism). Our task in taking a dialectical approach is not to say whose views are right or wrong, but to recognize "the truth in all sides of the conflict and understanding the ways in which multiple realities constitute the whole of the cultural quandary" (Cargile, 2005, p. 117).

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

communication A symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed.

The second component, **communication,** is as complex as culture and can be defined in many different ways. The defining characteristic of communication is meaning, and we could say that communication occurs whenever someone attributes meaning to another person's words or actions. Communication may be understood as a "symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed" (Carey, 1989, p. 23). The three perspectives emphasize different aspects of this communication process.

For example, the social science perspective emphasizes the various components of communication: There is a sender/receiver, message, channel, and context. This perspective also emphasizes that communication tends to be patterned and therefore can be predicted. This tradition also focuses on the variables, or influences on the communication, like gender, or the nature of a relationship. For example, people in long-term relationships will communicate in a different way from individuals who have recently met, or men and women will tend to communicate in different ways.

The interpretive perspective emphasizes the symbolic, processual nature of communication; the symbolic nature of communication means that the words we speak or the gestures we make have no inherent meaning. Rather, they gain their significance from an agreed-upon meaning. When we use symbols to communicate, we assume that the other person shares our symbol system. Also, these symbolic meanings are conveyed both verbally and nonverbally. Thousands of nonverbal behaviors (gestures, postures, eye contact, facial expressions, and so on) involve shared meaning.

To make things more complicated, each message has more than one meaning; often, there are many layers of meaning. For example, the message *I love you* may mean, "I'd like to have a good time with you tonight," "I feel guilty about what I did last night without you," "I need you to do me a favor," "I have a good time when I'm with you," or "I want to spend the rest of my life (or at least the next few hours) with you." When we communicate, we assume that the other person takes the meaning that we intend. It is more likely, when individuals come from different cultural backgrounds and experiences, that this assumption may be faulty.

The interpretive perspective also emphasizes that the *process* by which we negotiate meaning is dynamic. Communication is not a singular event but is ongoing. It relies on other communication events to make sense. When we enter into communication with another person, we simultaneously take in messages through all of our senses. The messages are not discreet and linear but simultaneous, with blurry boundaries of beginning and end. When we negotiate meaning, we are creating, maintaining, repairing, or transforming reality. This implies that people are actively involved in the communication process. One person cannot communicate alone.

The critical perspective emphasizes the importance of societal forces in the communication process. That is, that all voices and symbols are not equal, but

are arranged in a social hierarchy in which some individual characteristics are more highly valued than others; for example, people are more likely to listen carefully to a police officer than to a young child. In addition, powerful social symbols—for example, flags, national anthems, and Disney logos—also communicate meaning nonverbally. Many of these symbols are material as well; that is, they have material consequences in the world. For example, when schoolchildren in the United States bring guns to school and kill schoolmates, the symbolism of these acts communicates something, and the acts themselves are material.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

The relationship between culture and communication is complex. A dialectical perspective assumes that culture and communication are interrelated and reciprocal. That is, culture influences communication, and vice versa. Thus, cultural groups influence the process by which the perception of reality is created and maintained: "All communities in all places at all times manifest their own view of reality in what they do. The entire culture reflects the contemporary model of reality" (Burke, 1985, p. 11). However, we might also say that communication helps create the cultural reality of a community. Let's see how these reciprocal relationships work.

How Culture Influences Communication

Intercultural communication scholars use broad frameworks from anthropology and psychology to identify and study cultural differences in communication. Two of the most relevant were developed by anthropologists Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) and by social psychologist Hofstede (1984).

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck Value Orientations Researchers Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck studied contemporary Diné (Navaho) and descendants of Spanish colonists and European Americans in the Southwest in the 1950s. They emphasized the centrality of **cultural values** in understanding cultural groups. Values are the most deeply felt beliefs shared by a cultural group; they reflect a shared perception of what ought to be, and not what is. Equality, for example, is a value shared by many people in the United States. It refers to the belief that all humans are created equal, even though we must acknowledge that, in reality, there are many disparities, such as in talent, intelligence, or access to material goods.

cultural values The worldview of a cultural group and its set of deeply held beliefs.

Intercultural conflicts are often caused by differences in value orientations. For example, some people feel strongly that it is important to consider how

STUDENT VOICES

International students describe the different cultural and communication patterns they encounter in the United States.

A graduate student from India noted the U.S. patterns of greeting. In her native culture people only say hello to those they know. Initially, she was surprised by the frequency with which Americans greet each other; she later became disillusioned:

> *I thought, they are really interested in how I am. Then . . . "I'm fine and how about you?" Then I realized that people are really not interested in the answer. It is just a way of acknowledging you.*

A British student commented on how openly Americans share their religious affiliation.

> *At first, I felt like a bit separated because I didn't quite fit into any. . . . They didn't know quite how to respond to me. I thought, Oh, am I supposed to be religious? Am I going to fit in here?*

A graduate student from Iran noted how Americans are taught to "sell themselves":

> *The job search is another thing in this country that is culturally quite different. . . . In my society, mostly, they ask the professors in the university about efficient people or good students—there is not, you know, no selling yourself. And for the first couple of months I wasn't very successful because I didn't have the experience in selling myself.*

Source: From L. A. Erbert, F. G. Perez, and E. Gareis (2003). Turning points and dialectical interpretations of immigrant experiences in the United States. *Western Journal of Communication*, *67*, 113–137.

things were done in the past. For them, history and tradition help provide guidance. Values often conflict among participants in international assistance projects in which future-oriented individuals show a lack of respect for traditional ways of doing things. And conflicts may be exacerbated by power differentials, with some values privileged over others. Organizational communication scholars have pointed out that many U.S. workplaces reward extremely individualistic relationships and "doing" behaviors at the expense of more collaborative (and equally productive) work (Buzzanell, 1994). Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck suggested that members of all cultural groups must answer the following important questions:

- What is human nature?
- What is the relationship between humans and nature?
- What is the relationship between humans?
- What is the preferred personality?
- What is the orientation toward time?

TABLE 3-2 KLUCKHOHN AND STRODTBECK VALUE ORIENTATIONS

	Range of Values		
Human nature	Basically good	Mixture of good and evil	Basically evil
Relationship between humans and nature	Humans dominate	Harmony exists between the two	Nature dominates
Relationships between humans	Individual	Group oriented	Collateral
Preferred personality	"Doing": stress on action	"Growing": stress on spiritual growth	"Being": stress on who you are
Time orientation	Future oriented	Present oriented	Past oriented

Source: Adapted from F. Kluckhohn and F. Strodtbeck, *Variations in Value Orientation* (Chicago: Row, Peterson, 1961).

According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, there are three possible responses to each question as they relate to shared values. (See Table 3-2.) Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck believed that, although all responses are possible in all societies, each society has one, or possibly two, preferred responses to each question that reflect the predominant values of that society. Religious beliefs, for example, may reinforce certain cultural values. The questions and their responses become a framework for understanding broad differences in values among various cultural groups. Although the framework was applied originally to ethnic groups, we can extend it to cultural groups based on gender, class, nationality, and so on.

The Nature of Human Nature As the table shows, there are three possible responses, or solutions, to basic questions about human nature. One solution is a belief in the fundamental goodness of human nature. Legal practices in a society that holds this orientation would emphasize rehabilitating violators of the law; jails and prisons would be seen as places to train violators to rejoin society as contributing citizens. Religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism tend toward this orientation, focusing on improving the natural goodness of humans.

A second solution reflects a perception of a combination of goodness and evil in human nature. Many groups within the United States hold this value orientation, although there has been a shift in views for many U.S. Americans in the past 50 years. With regard to religious beliefs, there is less emphasis on the fundamental evil of humanity, which many European settlers of the Puritan tradition believed (Kohls, 1996). However, the current emphasis is on incarceration and punishment for violators of the law. For example, consider

STUDENT VOICES

Values can take many different forms. In this post, Ahmed explains different cultural value systems as they relate to education professionals.

As we all know, students in the United States do not give as much respect to their professors as compared to students from other countries. I have had encounters that can relate to that. When I used to go to school in Pakistan, I remember that we were taught to show and talk with a lot of respect towards our teachers. We did not call them by their first names, but we used to call them by madam, sir, or professor. Then when I moved to Canada and started going to school there, I found it really weird that I was calling my teachers professor, and the other students were just very casual in getting their attention. That really seemed to surprise me because I had always learned to respect my professors and call them in a professional way, but the other students around me were very informal with their teachers. At first it seemed awkward for me, but as time went on I got used to it, and started to be as informal as the other students.

—Ahmed

the increase in "three strikes" legislation and the lack of interest in rehabilitation and reform. Given this orientation, not surprisingly, the United States currently has a higher proportion of citizens incarcerated than any other industrialized country.

According to the third orientation, human nature is essentially evil. Societies that hold this belief would be less interested in rehabilitation of criminals than in punishment. We often have trouble understanding torture or the practice of cutting off hands and other limbs—practices prevalent in many societies in the past—without understanding their orientation to human nature. While he lived in Belgium, Tom was particularly struck by the display of punishments and tortures in the Counts of Flanders Castle in Ghent. Perhaps the key to understanding these cultural practices is an understanding of the Christian view of humans as essentially evil and born in sin.

Relationship Between Humans and Nature In most of U.S. society, humans dominate nature. For instance, scientists seed clouds when we need rain, and engineers reroute rivers and build dams to meet the needs for water, recreation, and power. We control births with drugs and medical devices, and we make snow and ice for the recreational pastimes of skiing and skating. Certainly, not everyone in the United States agrees that humans should always dominate nature. Conflicts between environmentalists and land developers often center on disagreements over this value orientation. And, of course, there are variations in how these values play out in different societies. For example, a country like Canada, which generally espouses a "humans over nature" orientation, still seems more concerned with environmental issues than does the United States. As described by a student,

> *Canada is very concerned about protecting their environment, and this is very clear even if you are just traveling through. They are concerned about clean water,*

POINT *Of* VIEW

Communication scholars Shim, Kim, and Martin describe how the value of collectivism is expressed through *kibun* in contemporary Korean interpersonal relationships:

> *For Koreans* kibun *is when "an inner, peaceful environment is maintained." For Koreans to develop and maintain harmonious relationships they must be able to accurately "read" the* kibun *of others. Preserving the* kibun *of one or more parties in an interpersonal communicative exchange or relationship takes precedence over all else and a violation of an individual's* kibun *may result in the termination of the communication interaction or even the relationship itself.*
>
> *Due to the Confucian emphasis on harmony and hierarchal order in relationships, an individual should always express respect and concern for another's* kibun, *as well as express a concern for the* kibun *of the entire group/situation. . .This sense is extremely important in a business context. Within the business world it is socially important not to let your true feelings show through in your facial expressions. This may unconsciously show disrespect to your clients or traders, and can essentially make or break your business relationship or deal. To truly understand someone you must know how to maintain that person's* kibun, *their mood, feelings, or state of mind.*

Source: Adapted from Y-J. Shim, M-S, Kim, and J. N. Martin, *Changing Korea: Understanding Culture and Communication* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), pp. 77–78.

clean air and not doing too much logging of their trees, keeping streams free of pollution, etc.

In societies that believe mainly in the domination of nature over humans, decisions are made differently. Families may be more accepting of the number of children that are born naturally. There is less intervention in the processes of nature, and there are fewer attempts to control what people see as the natural order.

Many Native Americans and Japanese believe in the value of humans living in harmony with nature, rather than one force dominating the other. In this value orientation, nature is respected and plays an integral part in the spiritual and religious life of the community. Some societies—for example, many Arab groups—emphasize aspects of both harmony with and domination of nature. This reminds us that values are played out in very complex ways in any cultural group.

Relationships Between Humans Some cultural groups value individualism, whereas others are more group oriented. The cultural differences pertaining to these values distinguish two types of societies. Individualism, often cited as a value held by European Americans, places importance on individuals rather than on families, work teams, or other groups (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). This characteristic is often cited as the most important European

American cultural value. In contrast, people from more collectivistic societies, like those in Central and South America, Asia, and many Arab societies, place a great deal of importance on extended families and group loyalty. In the United States, this is the case in Amish communities and in some Latino/a and Native American communities. A visitor to Mexico described one example of collectivism in that culture:

> *I remember that in public that children always seem to be accompanied by someone older, usually a family member. People went around in family groups—children with older siblings, grandparents, aunts—not nearly so age-segregated as it is here in the U.S.*

The collateral orientation emphasizes the collectivist connection to other individuals (mostly family members) even after death. This orientation is found in cultures in which ancestors are seen as a part of the family and are influential in decisions even though they are not alive. Examples of this include the Asian practice of maintaining a table in the house to honor their ancestors or the Mexican "Day of the Dead" practice of having a picnic near the graves of the family members and leaving food for them.

Values may also be related to economic status or rural–urban distinctions. In the United States, for example, working-class people tend to be more collectivistic than middle- or upper-class people. (Working-class people reportedly donate a higher percentage of their time and money to help others.) Historian Roxanne A. Dunbar (1997), who grew up poor in Oklahoma, describes an encounter she had with middle-class individualism while on an extended car trip with her new husband, Jimmy. They passed several stranded motorists, the women sitting in the shade while the men worked on the cars. She was surprised when her husband didn't stop to help:

> *"Why don't we stop?" I asked. No one in my family would ever have passed up a stranded motorist. . . .*
>
> *"They're hustlers, rob you blind, highway bandits," Jimmy said.*
>
> *"How do you know?"*
>
> *"I just know, they use the kids and old people for bait to get you to stop, then rob you, they're transients, fruit pickers, white trash."*
>
> *I stared at the sad faces as we passed by and tried to see the con artists and criminals behind the masks. But they merely looked familiar, like my own relatives. (p. 83)*

These cultural values may influence patterns of communication. For example, people who value individualism *tend* also to favor direct forms of communication and to support overt forms of conflict resolution. People in collectivistic societies *may* employ less direct communication and more avoidance-style conflict resolution. Of course, sometimes people belong to cultural groups that hold contradictory values. For example, most U.S. work contexts require highly individualistic communication, which may conflict with the collectivistic family or ethnic backgrounds of some workers. Workers may find it hard to reconcile and live with these competing values. Consider the experience of Lucia, a Native American college student. When one of her uncles passed away during the first week of

FIGURE 3-2 Holidays are significant ways of enacting and transmitting culture and cultural values across the generations. For example, Kwanzaa is an important holiday for many African Americans. It was established in 1966 by Ron Karenga and lasts seven days—December 26 to January 1—to mark seven important cultural values: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. What holidays does your family celebrate? What cultural values are being transmitted in those celebrations? (© *Lawrence Migdale/Getty*)

school, she was expected to participate in family activities. She traveled out of state with her family to his home, helped cook and feed other family members, and attended the wake and the funeral. Then her mother became ill, and she had to care for her. Thus, she missed the first two weeks of school. Some of her professors were sympathetic; others were not. As Lucia describes it, she feels almost constantly torn between the demands of her collectivistic family and the demands of the individualistic professors and administration.

Preferred Forms of Activity The most common "activity value" in the United States is the "doing" orientation, which emphasizes productivity. (Remember the expression "Idle hands are the devil's workshop"?) Employment reward systems reflect this value in that workers often must document their progress (e.g., in numbers of sales made or numbers of clients seen). In general, the highest status is conferred on those who "do" (sports figures, physicians, lawyers), rather than on those who "think" (philosophers, professors, priests) (Stewart & Bennett, 1991).

The "growing" orientation emphasizes spiritual aspects of life. This orientation seems to be less prevalent than the other two, perhaps practiced only

POINT *of* VIEW

In an interview that appears in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, François Mas was asked to explain the popularity of the medication Viagra (a remedy for sexual impotence) in the United States. He relates the popularity to the "can do" value of the U.S. American people.

> *Probably the most revealing is the "can do" attitude. This attitude, inherited from the pioneers, is how American society, in general, deals with existing problems. Centered on the concrete and practical applications, and often seen as naive in the view of older cultures, this approach has the advantage of deploying a kind of energy and rejecting opposition to progress.*
> (Le plus révélateur étant le "can do." . . . Cette attitude, héritée de pionniers, est celle de la société américaine en général face aux problèmes de l'existence. Centrée sur le réel et les applications pratiques, souvent naïve dans son expression aux yeux de cultures plus anciennes, cette approach a l'avantage de déployer une certaine énergie et de refuser l'immobilisme.)

Source: From F. Mas, "Vers un Renouveau Sexuel," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, May 1998, pp. 21–27.

in Zen Buddhism and as a cultural motif in the United States in the 1960s (Stewart & Bennett, 1991). Some societies, as in Japan, combine both "doing" and "growing" orientations, emphasizing action and spiritual growth. The third solution is to emphasize "being," a kind of self-actualization in which the individual is fused with the experience. Some societies in Central and South America, as well as in Greece and Spain, exhibit this orientation.

Orientation to Time Most U.S. cultural communities—particularly European American and middle class—seem to emphasize the future. Consider the practices of depositing money in retirement accounts or keeping appointment books that reach years into the future. Other societies—for example, in Spain or Greece—seem to emphasize the importance of the present, a recognition of the value of living fully in and realizing the potential of the present moment. One of our friends described her impression of this value difference after a visit to Mexico:

> *I had a wonderful experience in Mexico. I liked the energy—there was ALWAYS so much going on in the streets, and in the* zocalo, *all hours of the day and night. And when I returned to the U.S., the streets seemed so dead—everyone individually alone in their own little houses here. I felt suddenly so sensory-deprived!! I guess I also liked it partly because it is so different, culturally, from the way I grew up. The emphasis of expressing and focusing on life in the present. I don't want to imply that life is a constant thoughtless fiesta in Mexico, because it's not. But there was a kind of joie de vivre and enjoyment of life NOW that certainly was not present in my family's very constrained, restrained, serious lifestyle! And so Mexico seemed a great contrast!*

Many European and Asian societies strongly emphasize the past, believing that knowledge and awareness of history has something to contribute to an understanding of contemporary life. For example, the Leaning Tower of Pisa was closed for 10 years while Italian workers repaired structural damage to this historic building.

Hofstede Value Orientations Social psychologist Geert Hofstede (1984) extended the work of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, based on extensive cross-cultural study of personnel working in IBM subsidiaries in 53 countries. Whereas Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) based their framework on cultural patterns of ethnic communities within the United States, Hofstede and colleagues examined value differences among national societies. Hofstede identified five areas of common problems. One problem type, individualism versus collectivism, appeared in the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck framework. Although the problems were shared by different cultural groups, solutions varied from culture to culture (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004). As shown in Table 3-3, the problem types are identified as follows:

- Power distance: social inequality, including the relationship with authority
- Femininity versus masculinity: the social implications of having been born male or female
- Ways of dealing with uncertainty, controlling aggression, and expressing emotions
- Long-term versus short-term orientation to life

Hofstede then investigated how these various cultural values influenced corporate behavior in various countries. Let's examine the other problem types more closely. (See Table 3-3.)

power distance A cultural variability dimension that concerns the extent to which people accept an unequal distribution of power.

Power distance refers to the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept the unequal distribution of power. Denmark, Israel, and New Zealand, for example, value small power distance. Most people there believe that less hierarchy is better and that power should be used only for legitimate purposes. Therefore, the best corporate leaders in those countries are those who minimize power differences. In societies that value large power distance—for example, Mexico, the Philippines, and India—the decision-making process and the relationships between managers and subordinates are more formalized. In addition, people may be uncomfortable in settings in which hierarchy is unclear or ambiguous.

masculinity–femininity value A cultural variability dimension that concerns the degree of being feminine—valuing fluid gender roles, quality of life, service, relationships, and interdependence—and the degree of being masculine—emphasizing distinctive gender roles, ambition, materialism, and independence.

The **masculinity–femininity value** is two-dimensional (Hofstede, 1998). It refers to (1) the degree to which gender-specific roles are valued and (2) the degree to which cultural groups value so-called masculine values (achievement, ambition, acquisition of material goods) or so-called feminine values (quality of life, service to others, nurturance, support for the unfortunate). IBM employees in Japan, Austria, and Mexico scored high on the masculine values orientation, expressing a general preference for gender-specific roles, with some roles (e.g., main wage

TABLE 3-3 HOFSTEDE VALUE ORIENTATIONS

Power Distance	
Low power distance	**High power distance**
Less hierarchy better	More hierarchy better
e.g. Denmark, Israel, New Zealand	e.g. Mexico, India
Femininity/Masculinity	
Femininity	**Masculinity**
Fewer gender-specific roles	More gender-specific roles
Value quality of life, support for unfortunate	Achievement, ambition, acquisition of material goods
e.g. Denmark, Norway, Sweden	e.g. Japan, Austria, Mexico
Uncertainty Avoidance	
Low uncertainty avoidance	**High uncertainty avoidance**
Dislike rules, accept dissent	More extensive rules, limit dissent
Less formality	More formality
e.g. Great Britain, Sweden, Hong Kong	e.g. Greece, Portugal, Japan
Long-term/Short-term Orientation	
Short-term orientation	**Long-term orientation**
Universal guidelines for good and evil	Definition of good and evil depends on circumstances
Prefer quick results	Value perseverance and tenacity
e.g. Western, Religions, Judaism, Christianity, Islam	e.g. Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism

Source: Adapted from G. Hofstede and G. J. Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind,* 2nd ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2004), p. 232.

earner) better filled by men and other roles (e.g., homemaker, teacher) by women. In contrast, employees in northern Europe (Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands) tended to rank higher in feminine values orientation, reflecting more gender equality and a stronger belief in the importance of quality of life for all.

uncertainty avoidance A cultural variability dimension that concerns the extent to which uncertainty, ambiguity, and deviant ideas and behaviors are avoided.

Uncertainty avoidance concerns the degree to which people who feel threatened by ambiguous situations respond by avoiding them or trying to establish more structure to compensate for the uncertainty. Societies that have a weak uncertainty avoidance orientation (Great Britain, Sweden, Hong Kong, and the United States) prefer to limit rules, accept dissent, and take risks. In contrast, those with a strong uncertainty avoidance orientation (Greece, Portugal, and Japan) usually prefer more extensive rules and regulations in organizational settings and seek consensus about goals.

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I recently spent two weeks in Mexico City. It was an amazing experience. The contrast between Phoenix and Mexico City totally blew me away, especially the architecture. I mean, just walking down the street you see buildings all around you that are hundreds of years old. We went to the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe, and our guide showed us the exact hill where Juan Diego supposedly saw the Virgin and brought back roses to prove to the priests that he saw her. The priests then built a church exactly right there because that was what the Virgin told Juan to tell the priests to do. Juan Diego is like a national hero in Mexico, and this place where they built these churches is totally sacred. People come from all over Mexico to this exact place, and it is just so hugely important to them.

We also went to Teotihuacán and Templo Mayor. Both are ancient ruins from the Aztecs. These places were really, really amazing. Our guide pointed out for us places where the Spanish built buildings right on top of the ancient structures. It was their way of winning over the natives, of making the Spanish ways take over the ways of the native people. I realized that this change in architecture conveyed a whole history of different cultures and conquest. I was amazed that as I stood there at Templo Mayor, right in the heart of this huge city, I could literally see hundreds of years of history. And the domination also hit me. The Spanish had to build over the temples and other sacred sites of the Aztecs in order to win the hearts of the people. And they needed to make Juan Diego a national hero and make sacred the spot that he is said to have seen the Virgin of Guadalupe. And in order to make all that real to the people, they had to put it all in the architecture.

—Samantha

Hofstede's original framework contained only four problem types and was criticized for its predominantly western European bias. In response, a group of Chinese researchers developed and administered a similar, but more Asian-oriented, questionnaire to people in 22 countries around the world (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987). Their questionnaire included ideas related to Confucian-based thinking. In comparing their framework to Hofstede's, they concluded that there was, in fact, a great deal of overlap. Indeed, the three dimensions of individualism—collectivism, power distance, and masculinity–femininity—seem to be universal. However, uncertainty avoidance seems to be more relevant to Western societies. A fifth dimension that emerged from the Asian study and that seems to apply to both Eastern and Western societies is the **long-term versus short-term orientation,** which reflects a society's search for virtue or truth.

Those with a short-term orientation are concerned with possessing the truth (reflected in the Western religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), focus on quick results in endeavors, and recognize social pressure to conform. Those with a long-term orientation tend to respect the demands of virtue (reflected in

long-term versus short-term orientation
A cultural variability dimension that reflects a cultural-group orientation toward virtue or truth. The long-term orientation emphasizes virtue, whereas the short-term orientation emphasizes truth.

Eastern religions such as Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shintoism); to focus more on thrift, perseverance, and tenacity in whatever they attempt; and to be willing to subordinate themselves to a larger purpose.

Limitations of Value Frameworks Identifying cultural values helps us understand broad cultural differences, but it is important to remember that not everyone in a given society holds the dominant value (Kirkman, Lone, & Gibson, 2006). We shouldn't reduce individuals to mere stereotypes based on these value orientations. After all, not all Amish or Japanese are group oriented, and not all Americans and Australians are individualistic. Remember that cultures are dynamic and heterogeneous. Although people in small rural communities may be more collectively oriented, or more willing to help their neighbors, we cannot say that people in big cities ignore those around them.

Value heterogeneity may be particularly noticeable in a society that is undergoing rapid change. South Korea, for example has transformed itself in the past 50 years from a poor, agrarian country into a global economic and technological powerhouse; it is now the 10th largest economy, the world's #1 leader in broadband penetration, and has the most techno-savvy young people in the world. Influenced by Western capitalism and individualism, many young Koreans are now embracing more individualistic values, making their own decisions regarding marriage and career, rather than following their family's wishes—a practice unheard of 50 years ago (Shim, Kim, & Martin, 2008).

Another limitation of value frameworks is that they tend to "essentialize" people. In other words, people tend to assume that a particular group characteristic is the essential characteristic of a given member at all times and in all contexts. As early as 1990, researchers found that members of South Korean organizations were pursuing more individualistic values. One study found that the workers saw themselves as both individualistic and collectivistic, valuing competitiveness and self-reliance and a "can do" spirit. The researchers are quite emphatic that the results do not show that Koreans are becoming individualistic, but rather reflect a "discovery of individual in collectivistic frame of society" (Cho, 1994, p. 229); the workers acknowledge that their self-concept is not "I" *or* "we," but "I" *and* "we," both present at the same time (Cho, 1994). Another more recent study found that all Korean women interviewed expressed both a strong family orientation and a "relational" concept of self as well as a concept of the autonomous or independent self (Shim, Kim, & Martin, 2008). Similarly, researchers who have spent many years in China also observe that the contemporary Chinese "are not either individualist or collective but both at the same time" (Ambler & Witzel, 2000). It is useful to keep these tensions in mind when thinking about cultural groups—that they often reflect a set of dynamic contrasts, rather than a static set of specific characteristics or traits.

The cultural–individual dialectic reminds us that these value orientations exist on a continuum and are all present, to a greater or lesser extent, in all societies. For example, we could characterize the debate about health care in the United States as a struggle between "masculine" and "feminine" value orientations. Those with a "masculine" orientation believe that each person should

take care of him- or herself and be free to achieve and to acquire as many material goods as possible. Others, representing a "feminine" position, believe that everyone should sacrifice a little for the good of the whole and that everyone should be assured access to health care and hospitalization.

The differences–similarities dialectic reminds us that although people may differ with respect to specific value orientations, they also may hold other value orientations in common. For example, people may have different views on the importance of individual or group loyalty but share a belief in the essential goodness of human nature and find similarity in religious faith and practice. Finally, a static–dynamic dialectic reminds us that although group-related values tend to be relatively consistent, people are dynamic, and their behavior varies contextually. Thus, they may be more or less individualistic or group oriented depending on the context.

How Communication Reinforces Culture

Culture not only influences communication but also is enacted through, and so is influenced by, communication. Scholars of cultural communication describe how various aspects of culture are enacted in speech communities in situ, that is, in contexts. They seek to understand communication patterns that are situated socially and give voice to cultural identity. Specifically, they examine how the cultural forms and frames (terms, rituals, myths, and social dramas) are enacted through structuring norms of conversation and interaction. The patterns are not connected in a deterministic way to any cultural group (Philipsen, 2002).

Researcher Tamar Katriel (1990) examines "griping," a **communication ritual** that takes place among middle-class Israelis. Using the SPEAKING framework (scene, participant, end, act sequence, key, instrumentality, norm, and genre), Katriel analyzes the ritual in the following way: The griping topic must be one related to the domain of public life, and the purpose of the griping is not to solve the problem but to vent pent-up tensions and to affirm the shared reality of being Israeli. The ritual is a deeply felt, widely held, accessible behavioral pattern that affirms the cultural identity of Israelis. Although individuals belonging to other cultural groups may gripe, the activity may not be performed in this systematic cultural way and may not fill the same function.

communication ritual A set form of systematic interactions that take place on a regular basis.

The instrumentality (or channel) in griping is face-to-face, and the scene (or setting) usually is a Friday night gathering in a private home. Participants may be friends or acquaintances, or even strangers, but not real outsiders. (Katriel describes an embarrassing incident when a couple of gripers discovered that one of the group was merely a visiting Jew and not a native Israeli.) The key (or tone) of this ritual is one of plaintiveness and frustration. The act sequence comprises an initiation phase, when someone voices a complaint; this is followed by the acknowledgment phase, when others comment on the opener, and then a progression of subthemes. Finally, during the termination phase, everyone intellectually sighs and agrees that it is a problem: "It's no joke, things are getting worse all the time," the participants might say.

It is possible to compare different ways in which cultural norms and forms such as griping enact aspects of the culture and construct cultural identity. For

FIGURE 3-3 This photo of tourists watching Aztec dancers in Mexico City reflects an earlier context in which Aztec culture was dominant in Mexico. What role does Aztec culture play in Mexican life today? What does this communicate about the continued vitality of Aztec culture in today's Mexico? (*Courtesy Jackie Martinez, Arizona State University*)

example, although Katriel is not interested in making cross-cultural comparisons, she does allude to the difference between the Israeli griping ritual and a similar communication ritual that many white, middle-class U.S. residents engage in (Katriel & Philipsen, 1990). The communication ritual is a form of close, supportive, and flexible speech aimed at solving personal problems and affirming participants' identities. It is initiated when people sit down together, acknowledge the problem, and negotiate a solution. Katriel identifies similarities in these two rituals: Each fills the function of dramatizing major cultural problems, provides a preferred social context for the venting of problems and frustration, and promotes a sense of community identity (Katriel, 1990).

performative Acting or presenting oneself in a specific way so as to accomplish some goal.

A related approach from cultural communication studies sees culture as **performative.** If we accept this metaphor, then we are not studying any external (cultural) reality. Rather, we are examining how persons enact and represent their culture's worldviews. (See Figure 3-3.) For example, as Philipsen (1992) reports in his study of Teamsterville, men enact their gender (cultural) roles by remaining silent in many instances, engaging in talk mainly with peers but not with women or children.

These interpretive studies sometimes use cultural values as a way to explain cultural patterns. Kristine Fitch (1994) conducted a cross-cultural study comparing how people in Bogotá, Colombia, and Boulder, Colorado, got others to do what they wanted, a sociolinguistic form known as a *directive.* Fitch found that directives were seen as a problem in both societies, but as different kinds of problems that reflected and reinforced different value orientations.

Individuals in Boulder seemed to think that telling someone what to do should be approached carefully so as not to infringe on that person's autonomy—reflecting a value of individualism. In Bogotá, where collectivistic values reign, directives must be negotiated within relationships; there must be enough *confianza* (respect) or authority that one person is required by the social hierarchy to do the other's bidding. As you can see, cultural values can be used to show how culture influences communication or to explain how communication reinforces cultural values.

Communication as Resistance to the Dominant Cultural System

Resistance is the metaphor used in cultural studies to conceptualize the relationship between culture and communication. Borrowing this metaphor, we can try to discover how individuals use their own space to resist the dominant cultural system. For example, in the fall of 2005, nonwhite French youth rioted for days in the suburbs of Paris to communicate their resistance to the ways the French social system works. They felt that their efforts to integrate into mainstream French society were being thwarted by systematic racial discrimination. Similarly, workers often find ways to resist extreme individualism and competition in the workplace. For example, flight attendants may collaborate to protect each other from the critical gaze of supervisors (Murphy, 1998). Or students may sign their advisers' names on course registration forms, thereby circumventing the university bureaucracy. We can interpret these behaviors as resistance to the dominant cultural system.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNICATION AND CONTEXT

Context typically is created by the physical or social aspects of the situation in which communication occurs. For example, communication may occur in a classroom, a bar, or a church; in each case, the physical characteristics of the setting influence the communication. People communicate differently depending on the context. Context is neither static nor objective, and it can be multilayered. Context may consist of the social, political, and historical structures in which the communication occurs.

Not surprisingly, the social context is determined on the societal level. Consider, for example, the controversy over the Calvin Klein underwear ads in the early 1990s that used young adolescents as models: Many critics viewed the ads as equivalent to pedophilia. The controversy took place in a social context in which pedophilia was seen as perverse or immoral. This meant that any communication that encouraged or fed that behavior or perspective, including advertising, was deemed wrong by the majority of observers. However, pedophilia has not been considered wrong in all societies in all periods of history. To interpret the ads adequately, we would have to know something about the current feelings toward and meanings attached to pedophilia wherever the ads were displayed.

The political context in which communication occurs includes those forces that attempt to change or retain existing social structures and relations. For example, to understand the acts of protesters who throw blood or red paint on people who wear fur coats, we must consider the political context. In this case, the political context would be the ongoing informal debates about animal rights and cruelty to animals farmed for their pelts. In other locales or other eras, the protesters' communicative acts would not make sense or would be interpreted in other ways.

We also need to examine the historical context of communication. For example, the meaning of a college degree depends in part on the particular school's reputation. Why does a degree from Harvard communicate a different meaning than a degree from an obscure state university? Harvard's reputation relies on history—the large endowments given over the years, the important persons who have attended and graduated, and so forth.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNICATION AND POWER

Power is pervasive in communication interactions, although it is not always evident or obvious how power influences communication or what kinds of meaning are constructed. We often think of communication between individuals as being between equals, but this is rarely the case (Allen, 2004). As communication scholar Mark Orbe (1998) describes it,

> *In every society a social hierarchy exists that privileges some groups over others. Those groups that function at the top of the social hierarchy determine to a great extent the communication system of the entire society. (p. 8)*

Orbe goes on to describe how those people in power, consciously or unconsciously, create and maintain communication systems that reflect, reinforce, and promote their own ways of thinking and communicating. There are two levels of group-related power: (1) the primary dimensions—age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities, race, and sexual orientation—which are more permanent in nature, and (2) the secondary dimensions—educational background, geographic location, marital status, and socioeconomic status—which are more changeable (Loden & Rosener, 1991). The point is that the dominant communication systems ultimately impede those who do not share the systems. The communication style most valued in college classrooms, for example, emphasizes public speaking and competition (because the first person who raises his or her hand gets to speak). Not all students are comfortable with this style, but those who take to it naturally are more likely to succeed.

Power also comes from social institutions and the roles individuals occupy in those institutions. For example, in the classroom, there is temporary inequality, with instructors having more power. After all, they set the course requirements,

POINT *of* VIEW

Rose Weitz, a communication scholar, describes the importance of hair for women in U.S. society in attracting men. Although some writers say that women who use strategies like the "hair flip" in attracting men do so unconsciously and are just blindly obeying cultural rules, her interviews with women reveal that many are acutely aware of the cultural rules and the power of the "flip." Those who cannot participate feel marginalized.

A young white woman:

> *I have very long hair and use the hair flip, both consciously and unconsciously. When I do it [consciously], I check the room to see if anyone is looking in my direction but never catch a guy's eye first. I just do it in his line of vision. [I] bend over slightly, pretending to get something from a bag or pick something up) so that some of my hair falls in front of my shoulder. Then I lean back and flip my hair out and then shake my head so my hair sways a little.*

A young Latino woman:

> *In Hispanic culture hair is very important for a woman. It defines our beauty and gives us power over men. Now that I cut my hair short, I miss the feeling of moving my hair around and the power it gave me. . . .*

The hair flip is especially aggravating for those black women whose hair will not grow long. As one black graduate student explains,

> *As an African American woman, I am very aware of non–African American women "flipping" their hair. . . . I will speak only for myself here (but I think it's a pretty global feeling for many African American women), but I often look at women who can flip their hair with envy, wishfulness, perhaps regret?, . . . with my "natural" hair, if I run my fingers through it, it's going to be a mess [and won't] gracefully fall back into place.*

Source: R. Weitz, *Rapunzel's Daughters: What Women's Hair Tells Us About Women's Lives.* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004).

give grades, determine who speaks, and so on. In this case, the power rests not with the individual instructor but with the role that he or she is enacting.

Power is dynamic. It is not a simple one-way proposition. For example, students may leave a classroom at any time during a class period, or they may carry on a conversation while the professor is speaking—thus weakening the professor's power over them. They may also refuse to accept a grade and file a grievance with the university administration to have the grade changed. Further, the typical power relationship between instructor and student often is not perpetuated beyond the classroom. However, some issues of power play out in a broader social context (Johnson, 2001). For example, in contemporary society, cosmetic companies have a vested interest in a particular image of female beauty that involves purchasing and using makeup. Advertisements encourage

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Just out of college, I went to Japan and lived with a family for a few months. I vividly remember the sense of shock upon realizing the gap between my Japanese homestay family's perception of my status, power, and role compared to my own view of the situation. I had seen the experience as a chance for them to show and teach me various facets of Japanese home life and, reciprocally, as a time for me to study my language books and appreciate them. And I tried to learn as much as I could from Ken, their son, whom I considered a role model. One day, however, after what I suppose was a lengthy period of frustration on her part, my Japanese mother took me aside and said, "You seem to look for learnings behind each of Ken's actions, Douglas-san, but remember that since you are older it is you who must teach and be the responsible one."

—Douglas

women to feel compelled to participate in this cultural definition. Resistance can be expressed by a refusal to go along with the dominant cultural standards of beauty. Angela, a student from rural Michigan, describes how she resisted the "beauty culture" of her metropolitan university:

> *I came to school, and when I looked around I felt like I was inadequate. I had one of two choices: to conform to what the girls look like here, or to stay the same. I chose to stay true to my "Michigan" self. I felt more confident this way. I still remember looking at all of the blond girls with their fake boobs and black pants, strutting down campus. Four years later, I have a more mature attitude and realized that this culture wasn't for me.*

What happens when someone like Angela decides not to buy into this definition? Regardless of the woman's individual reason for not participating, other people are likely to interpret her behavior in ways that may not match her own reasons. What her unadorned face communicates is understood against a backdrop of society's definitions—that is, the backdrop developed by the cosmetics industry.

Dominant cultural groups attempt to perpetuate their positions of privilege in many ways. However, subordinate groups can resist this domination in many ways too. Cultural groups can use political and legal means to maintain or resist domination, but these are not the only means of invoking power relations. Groups can negotiate their various relations to culture through economic boycotts, strikes, and sit-ins. Individuals can subscribe (or not subscribe) to specific magazines or newspapers, change TV channels, write letters to government officials, or take action in other ways to change the influence of power.

The disempowered can negotiate power in varied and subtle ways. Tracy's (2000) ethnographic study of organizational communication on cruise ships analyzes the complex, subtle power dynamics between the ship's staff and management. The staff found it very stressful to follow management's mandate to "never say no [to the customers]" and "smile, we are on stage"; they demonstrated their

STUDENT VOICES

Many of the Thai managers I spoke with while doing research on American companies in Thailand stressed to me that when working with Thais one needed to be very aware of relationships and the hierarchy in which they exist. A Thai woman I spoke with, who was the secretary to the company's American president, provided this example of the need for attention to the details of relationships:

> *I believe in the United States it is common for a boss to ask the secretary to request some materials from another person or to call people and tell them the boss wants to see them. In the United States, you all look at each other as equals. It is not so important what someone's title is, their age, or time with the company. In Thailand, those things are very important. For example, my boss, who is an American, was always asking me to go call so-and-so and request a meeting or go talk to so-and-so and get some reports from them. By having me do this, the Thais were wondering several things: Why should we deal with her; she is just a secretary, and have I done something wrong that the boss does not want to talk with me? Finally, I got my boss to understand that when he had a request for someone—especially someone who was high-ranking in the company, someone who was much older than me or had been with the company longer than me—I would write a short note to that person, he would sign it, then I would pass the note along. That way, everyone's face was saved, their positions were recognized, and the boss came across as showing that he cared about his personal relationship with everyone. Mind you, I can run over and ask others of my same rank, age, or time with the company for any information or a meeting, but it is important to show respect toward those in high positions.*
>
> —Chris

resistance to management by making fun of the guidelines. Similarly, students might text each other during class or leave the classroom during a lecture as a way of negotiating the power relations between professor and students.

Power is complex, especially in relation to institutions or the social structure. Some inequities, such as in gender, class, or race, are more rigid than those created by temporary roles such as student or teacher. The power relations between student and teacher, for example, are more complex if the teacher is a female challenged by male students. We really can't understand intercultural communication without considering the power dynamics in the interaction.

A dialectical perspective looks at the dynamic and interrelated ways in which culture, communication, context, and power intersect in intercultural communication interactions. Consider this example: When Tom first arrived in Brussels in January 1998, he asked for a national train schedule from the information office at one of the train stations. Because he does not speak Dutch, he talked to the agent behind the counter in French. The agent gave Tom a copy

of the national train schedule in Dutch. When Tom asked if it was available in French, the man politely apologized, saying that it was the end of the season and there were no more available in French. It was clear to Tom that, although both parties followed *la forme de la politesse*, the agent did not want to give him the train schedule in French. Indeed, it was not near the end of the season because the 1997–1998 train schedule ran from June 1 to May 23.

From a communication perspective, it might not be at all clear that an intercultural struggle had taken place. None of the traditional signals of conflict were manifested: no raised voices, no harsh words, no curtness. Indeed, the exchange seemed polite and courteous.

From a cultural perspective, however, with various contexts and power differentials in mind, a different view of this intercultural interaction emerges. Belgium is a nation largely divided by two cultures, Flemish and Walloon, although there is a small German-speaking minority in the far eastern part of the country. Belgium is officially trilingual (Dutch, French, German); that is, each language is the official language in its territory. Dutch is the official language in Flanders, and French is the official language in Wallonia, except in the eastern part, where German is the official language. The only part of Belgium that is officially bilingual is the "Brussels-Capital Region."

There are many historical contexts to consider here. For example, Brussels is historically a Flemish city, located in Flanders (but near the border with Wallonia). Also, the French language dominated in Belgium from the time it gained independence from the Netherlands in 1830 until the early 20th century when Flemish gained parity.

There are social and economic contexts to consider as well. Since the 1960s, Flanders has been more economically powerful than Wallonia. The Brussels-Capital Region, despite being in Flanders, has become increasingly French speaking; some estimates place the current percentage of francophones at 85% to 90%. And nearly 30% of Brussels' residents are foreigners, most of whom are francophones. The increasing migration of city dwellers to the suburbs has also caused tensions because a number of communes located in Flanders now have a francophone majority.

So, although the Brussels-Capital Region is officially bilingual, this is the site of a number of struggles between French and Dutch. Indeed, as many Walloons told Tom, one does not get a sense of the conflict in Wallonia, but it is evident in Brussels. In the context of the various tensions that existed at the time of Tom's arrival in Belgium, the intercultural conflict at the train station is merely a playing out of much larger issues in Belgian society. Tom's entry into that society, as another francophone foreigner, situated his communication interactions in largely prefigured ways.

Although he later secured a French train schedule, he continued to use the Dutch one so he could learn the Dutch names of many Belgian cities as well. In any case, Tom's experience involved various dialectical tensions: (1) being a francophone foreigner versus a traditional Flemish resident, (2) being in an officially bilingual region versus an increasingly francophone one, (3) recognizing the

ANSWERS TO THE TEST OF U.S. CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

1. The correct answer is B. Lagniappe refers to small freebies or sometimes small gifts given by stores when you purchase something. It is used mostly in southern Louisiana and Mississippi but also along the Gulf Coast.
2. The correct answer is C. Hoppin' John is a New Year's tradition across the South. Normally it is simply rice and black-eyed peas, but it can include other items.
3. The correct answer is C. Shoofly pie, traditionally made from molasses, is a very sweet pie.
4. The correct answer is D. The Illini are a nonexistent tribe used as the mascot of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
5. The correct answer is A. Also sometimes just called Eid, this is a three-day joyous festival that celebrates family, friendship, community, and the Creator. It is a time of reconciliation.
6. The correct answer is A. It marks the anniversary of the Supreme Court ruling in *Loving v. Virginia* that overturned legal barriers to interracial marriage.
7. The correct answer is D. Hanamatsuri (or flower festival) is in the spring and marks a time of renewal and the birthday of Buddha.
8. The correct answer is A. Lefse is made primarily from potatoes.
9. The correct answer is D. Menudo is traditionally served on New Year's Day.
10. The correct answer is C. Haupia is made from coconut milk.

importance of formality and politeness in French versus the nature of this ancient conflict, (4) having abundant opportunities to learn French versus the lack of opportunities to study Dutch in the United States, and (5) illustrating the economic power of the Flemish in Belgium versus that of the francophones in Brussels. From these dialectical tensions and others, Tom attempted to understand and contextualize his intercultural interaction.

There are no simple lists of behaviors that are key to successful intercultural interaction. Instead, we encourage you to understand the contexts and dialectical tensions that arise in your intercultural communication experiences. In this way, you will better understand the constraints you face in your interactions. You will also come to a better understanding of the culture you are in and the culture you are from. Although the dialectical perspective makes the investigation of culture and communication far more complex, it also makes it far more exciting and interesting and leads to a much richer understanding.

INTERNET RESOURCES

www.geert-hofstede.com/index.shtml
This Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Web site provides a description of Hofstede's cultural values dimensions and the specific value scores for a variety of countries and regions of the world. For those of you who may be studying, working, or traveling abroad, you may find it useful to compare the values scores of your home culture and host culture to better understand how the two cultures are similar and different according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

www.powerofculture.nl/en
The Power of Culture Web site provides a review of art and cultural expressions, along with information on human rights, education, the environment, emancipation, and democratization. The Web site provides links to themes, such as cultural exchange and culture, conflict and culture, and ethics, with news stories and articles related to the subject matter.

http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=34603&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
This UNESCO Culture Sector Web site provides links to relevant news and events along with general background information about the changing realm of culture, both regionally and globally. The Web site also provides links that describe the culture and people from different regions worldwide, such as the Arab states, Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, and North America.

www.globalvoicesonline.org/
The Global Voices Online Web site is sponsored by Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society. The site provides blogs, podcasts, photo-sharing sites, and videoblogs from around the world. There is a site search available along with an index of countries and topics. You can select a topic, such as racism or politics, and select the country you wish to read and learn more about in terms of that topic.

SUMMARY

- There are four building blocks to understanding intercultural communication: culture, communication, context, and power.
- Culture can be viewed as
  - Learned patterns of group-related perceptions
  - Contextual symbolic patterns of meaning, involving emotions
  - Heterogeneous, dynamic, and a site of contestation
- Communication is a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed.

- Communication can be viewed as
  - Components of speaker, sender, receiver, message and channel, and variables
  - Symbolic and processual
  - Involving power dynamics
- The relationship between culture and communication is complex:
  - Culture influences communication and is enacted and reinforced through communication.
  - Communication also may be a way of contesting and resisting the dominant culture.
- The context also influences communication: It is the physical and social setting in which communication occurs or the larger political, social, and historical environment.
- Power is pervasive and plays an enormous, although often hidden, role in intercultural interactions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do definitions of culture influence people's perspectives on intercultural communication?
2. How do the values of a cultural group influence communication with members of other cultural groups?
3. What techniques do people use to assert power in communication interactions?
4. How is culture a contested site?

Go to the self-quizzes on the Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/martinnakayama5 to further test your knowledge.

ACTIVITIES

1. *Cultural Values.* Look for advertisements in newspapers and popular magazines. Analyze the ads to see if you can identify the social values to which they appeal.
2. *Culture: Deeply Felt or Contested Zone?* Analyze the lyrics of songs you listen to and try to identify patterns in the songs. Then think about your own cultural position and discuss which framework—the one proposed by cultural ethnographies (culture as deeply felt) or the one proposed by cultural studies (culture as a contested zone)—more adequately articulates the connection between culture and communication.

CHAPTER

6

LANGUAGE AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Discuss the four components of language.
2. Explain the nominalist, relativist, and qualified relativist positions on language and perception.
3. Describe the role of metaphor in understanding intercultural communication.
4. Identify cultural variations in communication style.
5. Give examples of variations in contextual rules.
6. Explain the power of labels.
7. Understand the challenges of multilingualism.
8. Explain the difference between translation and interpretation.
9. Understand the phenomenon of code switching and interlanguage.
10. Discuss the complexities of language policies.

> *When I first came to* Sor Juana, *I wasn't doing well in biology and . . . my mom talked to my teacher about it. My mother has a very thick [Spanish] accent. When she asked my teacher what was wrong, he replied that . . . my junior high probably didn't prepare me as well as others for this course. When my mom said that I went to a prestigious school and had a 4.0, he was stupefied . . . ." Oh, oh, oh. Laurie's your daughter. I'm so sorry, I thought you were someone else's mother," my teacher replied. It was pitiful. My teacher made an obviously racist assumption that because my mother was Hispanic I went to an inferior junior high and that was the reason for my problems in Biology . . . .*
>
> Mendoza-Denton, p. 50

Language use plays an important role in intercultural communication; it is closely tied with our and others' identities as we saw in the chapter on identity, and it is also related to the groups we belong to and our social place in society. In a world of multiple languages, we sometimes think that successful communication is just a matter of whether people speak the same language or not. However, communication is much more than language. In the story above, Laurie's mother and the teacher could communicate easily in English. However the interaction here is about much more than just the language spoken; in this case, *the way* English was spoken played an enormous role in how the encounter unfolded—resulting in (false) assumptions about Laurie's academic preparation, her social class, her place in society—and these assumptions influenced the whole communication encounter.

As this book shows, intercultural communication involves far more than merely language, but language clearly cannot be overlooked as a central element in the process. This chapter focuses on the verbal aspects of intercultural communication; the next chapter focuses on the nonverbal elements.

The social science approach generally focuses on language and its relation to intercultural communication, the interpretive approach focuses on contextual uses of linguistic codes, and the critical approach emphasizes the relations between discourse and power. This chapter uses a dialectical perspective to explore how language works dynamically in intercultural contexts. With the personal–contextual dialectic, we can consider not only how language use operates on an individual level but also how it is influenced by context. We also use the static–dynamic dialectic to distinguish between language and discourse, to identify the components of language, and to explore the relationship among language, meaning, and perception. Although it may seem that the components of language are static, the *use* of language is a dynamic process.

In this chapter, we also explore cultural variations of language. Then we discuss the relationship between language and power, and between language and identity, and examine issues of multilingualism, translation, and interpretation. Finally, we look at language and identity, language policies and politics, and globalization.

SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE

The social science perspective focuses on the individual aspects of language use: the components of language, language perception and thought, and on the way cultural groups use language in different ways. The study of linguistics is just

POINT *of* VIEW

Most languages have from 15 to 50 meaningful sound units, but the total number of all sound units for all languages is in the hundreds (West, 1975). The **International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)** was developed in 1889 to help linguists transcribe the pronunciation of words in different languages. It can also be useful when learning a foreign language. As you can see from the example below, it seems like another language, but actually is based primarily on the Latin alphabet.

IPA TRANSCRIPTION:

frʌstˈeɪʃnz ə ˈbɜst hɒtwɔtə ˈbɒ
dl̩ ɔ ˈləʊðɪŋ evɪɹ ˈməʊmn̩ ʌv ə ˈh
plədeɪ ɟɒə ˈpɑɪŋ ə ˈfɒtʃn̩ fɒ. ɪ
ts ˈjuːɪŋ ðə ˈrɒŋ ˈsaɪd ə ðə ˈsɛlət
eɪp ˈfɒgɡdŋ wʌ djə wə gɒɪŋ tə ˈ
seɪ ɔ ˈlɒkn̩ jəsɛlf ˈaʊt frʌstˈeɪʃn̩
z ʌðə ˈpiːpl̩ ˈpɑkn̩ ən ˈfɹʌnt əv jə
ˈgæɹədʒ ɔ ɹə ˈstɹiːmdʒə ˈɹɪdɪŋ ə
ˈɹɪvətŋ ˈlɛɾə ʌn ə ˈbʌs n̩ ˈtɜnɪn ɔ
və bəfɔ jə ˈgɛ tə ðə ˈbɒdm̩ əv
ðə ˈpeɪdʒ

ENGLISH "TRANSLATION":

Frustration is a burst hot-water bottle, or loathing every moment of a holiday you're paying a fortune for. It's using the wrong side of the Sellotape, forgetting what you were going to say, or locking yourself out. Frustration is other people parking in front of your garage, or a stranger reading a riveting letter on the bus and turning over before you get to the bottom of the page.

Source: From "English as a Second Language" (About.com), Retrieved August 16, 2008. http://esl.about.com/library/lessons/blphontranscript.htm.

one of many ways to think about language, and this study provides us with a useful foundation for our exploration of language in intercultural communication. As shown Table 6-1, linguists generally divide the study of language into four parts: semantics, syntactics, phonetics, and pragmatics.

Pragmatics is probably the most useful for students of intercultural communication because it focuses on actual language use—what people do with language—the focus of this chapter. People around the world speak many different languages and some scholars think that the particular language we speak influences how

International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) A system of phonetic notation devised in 1889 to help linguists transcribe the pronunciation of words in different languages.

TABLE 6-1 THE COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE

Component	Definition	Example
Semantics	The study of meaning—how individual words communicate the meanings we intend	Think about the word *chair.* Do we define *chair* by its shape? By its function? Does a throne count as a chair? How about a table we sit on? Is this a chair?
Syntactics	The study of the structure, or grammar—the rules for combining words into meaningful sentences. Order of words is important.	"The red car smashed into the blue car" has different meaning than "The blue car smashed into the red car."
Pragmatics	The study of how meaning is constructed in relation to receivers, how language is actually used in particular contexts in language communities.	Saying "that's an awesome outfit" has different meanings depending on the context. It could be mocking, flirting, or just descriptive.
Phonetics	The study of the sound system of language—how words are pronounced, which units of sounds (phonemes) are meaningful for a specific language and which sounds are universal. (See Figure 6-1.)	French has no equivalent sound of English *th;* Japanese has a sound which is between *r* and *l*

we see the world. Do speakers of Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, and other languages actually perceive the world differently, depending on the particular language they speak? Or do we all experience the world in the same way but have different ways of expressing our experiences? We tackle these questions in the next section.

Language and Perception

The question of how much of our perception is shaped by the particular language we speak is at the heart of the "political correctness" debate. We can address these questions from two points of view: the nominalist and the relativist.

The Nominalist Position According to the **nominalist position,** perception is not shaped by the particular language we speak. Language is simply an arbitrary "outer form of thought." Thus, we all have the same range of thoughts, which we express in different ways with different languages. This means that any thought can be expressed in any language, although some may take more or fewer words. The existence of different languages does not mean that people have different thought processes or inhabit different perceptual worlds. After all, a tree may be an *arbre* in French and an *arbol* in Spanish, but we all perceive the tree in the same way.

nominalist position The view that perception is not shaped by the particular language one speaks. (Compare with **relativist position** and **qualified relativist position.**)

STUDENT VOICES

There have been a few different times when an accent has affected my perception of a person. Usually, when the person with the accent is a male, I find it to be attractive. This may seem funny, but I think a lot of people feel this way. At first, I want to ask a whole bunch of questions: where the person is from, what it's like there, and so on. Then I realize I may be sticking my nose where it doesn't belong. So then I try to back down and not be so forward.

—Lyssa

relativist position The view that the particular language individuals speak, especially the structure of the language, shapes their perception of reality and cultural patterns. (Compare with **nominalist position** and **qualified relativist position.**)

The Relativist Position According to the **relativist position,** the particular language we speak, especially the structure of that language, determines our thought patterns, our perceptions of reality, and, ultimately, important cultural components. This position is best represented by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. As you may recall from Chapter 2, this hypothesis was proposed by Edward Sapir (1921), a linguist, and his student, Benjamin Whorf (1956), based on linguistic research they conducted in the 1930s and 1940s on Native American languages. They proposed that language is not merely an "instrument for voicing ideas but is itself the shaper of ideas, the guide for the individual's mental activity" (Hoijer, 1994, p. 194). According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, language defines our experience. For example, there are no possessives (*his/her/our/your*) in the Diné (Navajo) language; we might conclude, therefore, that the Diné think in a particular way about the concept of possession. Another example is the variation in verb forms in English, Spanish, and French. In English and Spanish, the present continuous verb form is frequently used; thus, a student might say, "I am studying" or *"Estoy estudiando."* A French speaker, in contrast, would use the simple present form, *"J'étudie."* The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests that, based on this variation in verb form, French, English, and Spanish speakers may think differently about movement or action.

Another frequently cited example involves variation in color vocabulary. The Diné use one word for blue and green, two words for two different colors of black, and one word for red; these four words form the vocabulary for primary colors in Diné culture. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests that English and Diné speakers perceive colors differently. Other examples of variations in syntax and semantics reflect differences in perception.

Similarly, people often cite the example of the languages of the Inuit or Yupik (incorrectly referred to as Eskimos) being rich in snow words. More recent research shows their snow vocabulary is no more extensive than that found in English (Pullum, 1991). However, scholars still say it is a handy example of the way proponents of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis think about the relations between language and thought (Li & Geitman, 2002).

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has had tremendous influence on scholarly thinking about language and its impact on everyday communication. It questions the basic assumption that we all inhabit the same perceptual world, the same social reality.

FIGURE 6-1 Language is an important aspect of intercultural communication. The particular symbols used in any language are arbitrary and have no meaning in and of themselves, as these multilanguage optometrist charts illustrate. Language symbols communicate meaning only when used in particular contexts. (© *Bill Aron/Getty Images*)

However, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis position has been critiqued by a number of studies that challenge the connection between language and how we think (Kenneally, 2008). The most recent position, the **qualified relativist position,** takes a more moderate view of the relationship between language and perception. Steven Pinker (2007), a renowned cognitive scientist, for example, cautions against assuming a simplistic connection between language and thought and rejects the Sapir-Whorf assumption that the particular language we speak compels us to perceive the world in a particular way or prevents us from thinking in different ways. At the same time, he also rejects the extreme nominalist position. He advocates a middle ground, suggesting that the meaning of our words depends on an underlying framework of basic cognitive concepts. The tenses of verbs, for example, are shaped by our innate sense of time. Nouns are constrained by our intuitive notions about matter. He uses the example of applesauce and pebbles to argue that we naturally categorize (and therefore label) these two substances differently (as "hunk" and "goo"). By looking at language from the perspective of our thoughts, he shows that what may seem like arbitrary aspects of speech (hunk and goo distinction) aren't arbitrary at all: They are by-products of our evolved mental machinery. In sum, all languages have the formal and expressive power to communicate the ideas, beliefs, and desires of their users. From this vast range of possibilities, human communities select what they want to say and how they want to say it (Li & Gleitman, 2002, p. 291). This view allows for more freedom than the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. As you read the

research findings that follow, you may see the wisdom of the qualified relativist position.

Recent Research Findings

language acquisition
The process of learning language.

There are three areas of research that investigate the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: (1) children's **language acquisition,** (2) cross-cultural differences in language, and (3) cognitive development of children who are deaf. As you will see, most of the research in these areas does not support a strict interpretation of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

Language Acquisition in Children If language structures thought, then language must precede, and only subsequently influence, thought. This raises the question of whether it is possible to think without language. B. F. Skinner, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and other psychologists have long wrestled with this question. As their works indicate, they seem to conclude that language and thought are so closely related that it is difficult to speak of one as initiating influence over the other. Their works thus do not provide evidence for a strong relativist position.

Cross-Cultural Differences in Language Do groups with different language labels perceive the world in different ways? Consider a familiar example. Many men in the United States might identify someone's shirt as "red," whereas women viewing the same shirt might call it "cranberry" or "cherry" or "scarlet." Both the men and the women recognize the color distinctions, but men tend to use fewer words than women to distinguish colors.

The consensus has been that different ways to label color probably does not affect the perception of color in any systematic way. But very recent research shows that language might affect how quickly perceptions of color are categorized. While English speakers have one word for blue, Russian speakers have two words and distinguish between lighter blues (*goluboy*) and darker blues (*siniy*). In one study, Russian and English speakers were asked to look at three blocks of color and say which two were the same. If the Russians were shown three blue squares with two *goluboy* and one *siniy* or the other way around, they picked the two matching colors faster than if all three squares were shades from one blue group.

Other examples of cross-cultural research involves language and spatial reasoning. Can people who speak a language that has few words to describe spatial relationships (like right angles, parallel lines, triangles, etc.) recognize geometric relationships? The results of many recent studies say yes (Li & Gleitman, 2002). For example, one recent study focused on the Munduruku people, who live in isolated villages in Brazil, with no formal schooling. Their language has few words describing geometrical, or spatial, concepts and they had no rulers, compasses, or maps. Researchers showed the Munduruku subjects a diagram of three containers arranged in a triangle with one container identified as holding a hidden object. They were also shown three actual containers on

the ground arranged in the same way. The subjects were then asked to identify which of three containers on the ground hid an object. The results showed that the Munduruku were able to relate the geometrical information on the map to the geometrical relationships on the ground at a rate of 71%, about the same as American subjects. They understood parallelism and right angles and can use distance, angles, and other relationships in maps to locate hidden objects. The finding suggests, contrary to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, that language is not required to think about or perceive the world in a particular way (Dehaene, Izard, Pica, & Spelke, 2006).

Another example of cross-cultural research involves variations in verb forms. The Chinese language has no counterfactual verb form (illustrated by "If I had known, I *would have gone*, but I did not"). Researchers constructed stories using the counterfactual form and found that the Chinese respondents understood the concept of counterfactual and could answer questions appropriately even though this structure is not present in Chinese (Au, 1983, 1984, 1985; Bloom, 1981, 1984). No evidence indicates that Chinese speakers are unable to think in terms of counterfactuals; rather, they simply do not normally express thoughts using such constructions. Although these research examples do not support the nominalist position, they do not provide strong evidence for the relativist position either.

Cognition of Children Who Are Deaf Researchers have also tried to determine if children who are deaf or who have limited language use have diminished ability in perception or logical thinking. In one study, children with disabilities had the same categorizing competence, the same level of cognitive skill, as those children who could hear. The children were deficient in purely linguistic skills and short-term memory storage. The researchers concluded that children who are deaf do not seem to have a different worldview (Rhodda & Grove, 1987).

However, recent research comparing hearing children and home-signers (those who have hearing parents but hadn't learned sign language) found that children who knew spatial terms (e.g., middle, top, bottom) could locate a card in a box more quickly than those who did not. All the children were shown a box with cards; one card had a special star on the back. The children were asked to map the position of the target card in the first box to the same position in the second—similar to the activity in the study of the Munduruku. The researchers in this case found that those hearing children who knew words for spatial relationships had less trouble finding the special card in the second box than those without words for spatial relationship, whether young hearing children or home-signers. This may show that words can help us focus our thoughts . . . helps us carve up the world in specific ways (Kenneally, 2008).

Language and Thought: Metaphor

One way of thinking about the relationship between language and thought is to look at metaphors. A *metaphor* is an expression where a word (or words) is used outside of its normal conventional meaning to express a *similar* concept (Lakoff,

POINT *of* VIEW

Because we live in a more global world, think about the impact of language differences in hospital emergency rooms, as well as other everyday needs, such as fire departments, police departments, and so on. How can we ensure adequate services for everyone?

> *When a Spanish-speaking hospital receptionist refused to interpret during her lunch hour, doctors at St. Vincent's Staten Island Hospital turned to a 7-year-old child to tell their patient, an injured construction worker, that he needed an emergency amputation.*
>
> *With no one to bridge the language gap for another patient, a newly pregnant immigrant from Mexico with life-threatening complications, doctors pressed her to sign a consent form in English for emergency surgery. Understanding that the surgery was needed "to save the baby," the young married woman awoke to learn that the operation had instead left her childless and sterile. [. . .]*
>
> *In some cases, the monitors themselves witnessed the medical consequences of communication failures. Ana Maria Archila, executive director of the Latin American Integration Center, an immigrant rights and social service agency, said she and two others overheard doctors at St. Vincent's telling a construction worker, through his 7-year-old cousin, that the worker needed an amputation.*
>
> *"The child said, 'I'm not sure if they said foot or said toe,' Ms. Archila recalled. "This worker, he was about to cry."*
>
> *The monitors later learned that it was the man's third trip to the emergency room after a construction accident that had crushed his toe weeks earlier. Unable to explain his symptoms in English, he reported, he had been handled dismissively until he returned with his big toe blackened by gangrene.*
>
> *Later, after the toe was amputated, Ms. Archila added, he had to rely on a patient in the next bed to translate the doctors' instructions for post-operative care.*

Source: From N. Bernstein, "Language Barrier Called Health Hazard in E.R.," *New York Times*, April 21, 2005, p. B1.

1992). For example, "you are my sunshine." Although an individual cannot literally *be* sunshine, comparing someone to sunshine expresses a particular positive meaning. Experts used to think that metaphors are about language, or literary writing, not useful for understanding everyday speech. A famous cognitive scientist and linguist, George Lakoff, disagrees and proposes that metaphors are part of thinking, one way we organize our thoughts, in everyday living; in fact, metaphors are "a major and indispensable part of our ordinary conventional way of conceptualizing the world, and that our everyday behavior reflects our metaphorical understanding of experience" (p. 203).

Understanding a culture's metaphors, then, helps us understand something about the culture itself. Consider the English metaphor of likening love to a journey: *Our relationship has hit a dead-end street. Look how far we've come. It's been a long, bumpy road. We can't turn back now. We're at a crossroads. We may have to go our separate ways. The relationship isn't going anywhere. We're spinning our wheels. Our relationship is off the track.* These are ordinary, everyday English expressions. They are not poetic, nor are they necessarily used for special rhetorical effect, but for *reasoning about* our relationships (Lakoff, p. 205).

Metaphors can also be a useful way to understand other cultures. Some metaphors are universal, like the metaphor of an angry person as a pressurized container, for example **(**Kövecses, 2005). Consider these English phrases: "His pent-up anger *welled up* inside him. Billy's just *blowing off* steam. He was *bursting* with anger. When I told him *he just exploded.*" Other languages have similar expressions. The universality of the metaphor may rest in the universal human physiology—since physical bodily changes actually occur when we are angry (blood pressure rises, pulse rate increases, temperature rises). Metaphors may focus on different parts of the body; the Japanese, for example, have a number of metaphors that refer to the belly—where emotions are thought to rest. In contrast, U.S. Americans and Chinese tend to refer to the heart as the source of emotions (My heart is breaking; his heart swelled with pride).

In English, metaphors for happiness seem to center on a feeling of being up, light, fluid in a container (She was floating on air, bursting with happiness). However, the Chinese have a metaphor that does not exist in English—that happiness is flowers in the heart. Experts suggest that metaphors reflect cultural beliefs and values; in this case, the metaphor reflects the more restrained Chinese communication style, while the English metaphor of "happiness is being off the ground" reflects the relatively expressive English communication style (Kövecses, p. 71).

Cultural Variations in Communication Style

Language is powerful and can have tremendous implications for people's lives. For example, uttering the words *I do* can influence lives dramatically. Being called names can be hurtful and painful, despite the old adage "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me."

The particular language we use predisposes us to think in particular ways and not in others. For example, the fact that English speakers do not distinguish between a formal and an informal *you* (as in German, with *du* and *Sie*, or in Spanish, with *tu* and *usted*) may mean that English speakers think about formality and informality differently than do German or Spanish speakers. In Japanese, formality is not simply noted by *you;* it is part of the entire language system. Nouns take the **honorific** "o" before them, and verbs take more formal and polite forms. Thus, "*Doitsu-go ga dekimasen*" [I—or you, he, she, we, they—don't speak German] is more polite and formal than "*Doitsu-go ga dekinai.*"

honorific A term or expression that shows respect.

In other languages, the deliberate use of nonformal ways of speaking in more formal contexts can be insulting to another person. For example, French

speakers may use the *tu* form when speaking to their dog or cat, but it can be insulting to use the *tu* form in a more formal setting when speaking to relative strangers. Yet it may be permissible to use the *tu* form in more social settings with relative strangers, such as at parties or in bars. Here, pragmatics becomes important. That is, we need to think about what else might be communicated by others and whether they shift to more informal ways of speaking.

INTERPRETIVE PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE

communication style The metamessage that contexualizes how listeners are expected to accept and interpret verbal messages.

metamessage The meaning of a message that tells others how they should respond to the content of our communication based on our relationship to them.

high-context communication A style of communication in which much of the information is contained in the contexts and nonverbal cues rather than expressed explicitly in words. (Compare with **low-context communication.**)

low-context communication A style of communication in which much of the information is conveyed in words rather than in nonverbal cues and contexts. (Compare with **high-context communication.**)

Communication style combines both language and nonverbal communication. It is the **metamessage** that contextualizes how listeners are expected to receive and interpret verbal messages. A primary way in which cultural groups differ in communication style is in a preference for high- versus low-context communication. A **high-context communication** style is one in which "most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message" (Hall, 1976, p. 79). This style of communication emphasizes understanding messages without direct verbal communication. People in long-term relationships often communicate in this style. For example, one person may send a meaningful glance across the room at a party, and his or her partner will know from the nonverbal clue that it is time to go home.

In contrast, in **low-context communication,** the majority of meaning and information is in the verbal code. This style of communication, which emphasizes explicit verbal messages, is highly valued in many settings in the United States. Interpersonal communication textbooks often stress that we should not rely on nonverbal, contextual information. It is better, they say, to be explicit and to the point, and not to leave things ambiguous. However, many cultural groups around the world value high-context communication. They encourage children and adolescents to pay close attention to contextual cues (body language, environmental cues), and not simply the words spoken in a conversation (Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996).

William Gudykunst and Stella Ting-Toomey (2003) identify two major dimensions of communication styles: direct versus indirect and elaborate versus understated.

Direct Versus Indirect Styles This dimension refers to the extent to which speakers reveal their intentions through explicit verbal communication and emphasizes low-context communication. A direct communication style is one in which verbal messages reveal the speaker's true intentions, needs, wants, and desires. An indirect style is one in which the verbal message is often designed to camouflage the speaker's true intentions, needs, wants, and desires. Most of the time, individuals and groups are more or less direct depending on the context.

Many English speakers in the United States favor the direct speech style as the most appropriate in most contexts. This is revealed in statements like "Don't

beat around the bush," "Get to the point," and "What exactly are you trying to say?" Although "white lies" may be permitted in some contexts, the direct style emphasizes honesty, openness, forthrightness, and individualism.

However, some cultural groups prefer a more indirect style, with the emphasis on high-context communication. Preserving the harmony of relationships has a higher priority than being totally honest. Thus, a speaker might look for a "soft" way to communicate that there is a problem in the relationship, perhaps by providing contextual cues (Ueda, 1974). Some languages have many words and gestures that convey the idea of "maybe." For example, three Indonesians studying in the United States were invited by their adviser to participate in a cross-cultural training workshop. They did not want to participate, nor did they have the time. But neither did they want to offend their professor, whom they held in high regard. Therefore, rather than tell him they couldn't attend, they simply didn't return his calls and didn't show up at the workshop.

An international student from Tunisia told Judith and Tom that he had been in the United States for several months before he realized that if someone was asked for directions and didn't know the location of the place, that person should tell the truth instead of making up a response. He explained that he had been taught that it was better to engage in conversation, to give *some* response, than to disappoint the person by revealing he didn't know.

Different communication styles are responsible for many problems that arise between men and women and between persons from different ethnic groups. These problems may be caused by different priorities for truth, honesty, harmony, and conflict avoidance in relationships.

Elaborate Versus Understated Styles This dimension of communication styles refers to the degree to which talk is used. The elaborate style involves the use of rich, expressive language in everyday talk. For example, the Arabic language has many metaphorical expressions used in everyday speech. In this style, a simple assertive statement means little; the listener will believe the opposite.

In contrast, the understated style values succinct, simple assertions, and silence. Amish people often use this style of communication. A common refrain is, "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all." Free self-expression is not encouraged. Silence is especially appropriate in ambiguous situations; if one is unsure of what is going on, it is better to remain silent.

The exact style falls between the elaborate and the understated, as expressed in the maxim "Verbal contributions should be no more or less information than is required" (Grice, 1975). The exact style emphasizes cooperative communication and sincerity as a basis for interaction.

In international negotiations, visible differences in style can contribute to misperceptions and misunderstandings. For example, if we look at two open letters addressed to the Iraqi people in April 2003, we can see striking differences in the styles used by the British prime minister Tony Blair and the former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein was not captured by U.S. forces until

December 2003. On April 4, 2003, in a leaflet to be distributed to the Iraqi people, Mr. Blair writes:

From Tony Blair

As soon as Saddam Hussein's regime falls, the work to build a new free and united Iraq will begin. A peaceful, prosperous Iraq which will be run by and for the Iraqi people. Not by America, not by Britain, not by the UN—though all of us will help—but by you the people of Iraq.

For the first time in 25 years you will be free from the shadow of Saddam and can look forward to a new beginning for your families and your country.

That is already starting to happen in those parts of your country that have been liberated. But you want to know that we will stay to get the job done. You want to know that Saddam will be gone.

I assure you: he will be. Then, coalition forces will make the country safe, and will work with the United Nations to help Iraq get back on its feet. We will continue to provide immediate humanitarian aid, and we will help with longer-term projects.

Our troops will leave as soon as they can. They will not stay a day longer than necessary. (http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,929934,00.html)

In contrast, Saddam Hussein spoke in a more indirect and elaborate style in his open letter to the Iraqi people on April 30, 2003:

From Saddam Hussein to the great Iraqi people, the sons of the Arab and Islamic nation, and honourable people everywhere.

Peace be upon you, and the mercy and blessings of God.

Just as Hulaku entered Baghdad, the criminal Bush entered it, with Alqami, or rather, more than one Alqami.

They did not conquer you—you who reject the occupation and humiliation, you who have Arabism and Islam in your hearts and minds—except through betrayal.

Indeed, it is not a victory while there is still resistance in your souls.

What we used to say has now become reality, for we do not live in peace and security while the deformed Zionist entity is on our Arab land; therefore there is no rift in the unity of the Arab struggle.

Sons of our great people:

Rise up against the occupier and do not trust anyone who talks of Sunni and Shia, because the only issue that the homeland—your great Iraq—faces now is the occupation.

There are no priorities other than driving out the infidel, criminal, cowardly occupier. No honourable hand is held out to shake his, but, rather, the hand of traitors and collaborators.

I say to you that all the countries surrounding you are against your resistance, but God is with you because you are fighting unbelief and defending your rights. (http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,946805,00.html)

These different uses of language communicate different things to their culturally disparate audiences. As they also demonstrate, it is not easy to interpret language use from other people's perspectives.

Taking a dialectical perspective, though, should help us avoid stereotyping specific groups (such as Arabic or English speakers) in terms of communication style. We should not expect any group to use a particular communication style all the time. Instead, we might recognize that style operates dynamically and is related to context, historical forces, and so on. Furthermore, we might consider how tolerant we are when we encounter others who communicate in very different ways and how willing or able we are to alter our own style to communicate better.

Variations in Contextual Rules

Understanding some of the cultural variations in communication style is useful. A dialectical perspective reminds us that the particular style we use may vary from context to context. Think of the many contexts in which you communicate during the day—classroom, family, work, and so on—and about how you alter your communication to suit these contexts. You may be more direct with your family and less direct in classroom settings. Similarly, you may be more instrumental in task situations and more affective when socializing with your friends.

For example, one researcher studied the communication patterns involved in the common practice of "nagging" in U.S. American family contexts (Boxer, 2002). Nagging (repeated requests by one family member to another) usually concerns household chores and is often a source of conflict. More importantly, the communication practice seems to be related to issues of gender, power, and control. To be more specific, men are rarely perceived as the naggers; in this study, only six of the seventy sequences involved men nagging women. The researcher suggests that this is because they are perceived as having more power and, therefore, able to successfully request and gain compliance from another family member without resorting to nagging. This also means that children can have power (if they refuse to comply with a request despite lacking status), and parents can lack power despite having status. If our styles constrain how we request and respond to requests, then by nagging we lose power. Without power we are forced into nagging, and so it seems a vicious cycle.

A related study examines communication patterns in the Australian elementary school classroom, specifically "teacher talk" and how teachers dominate through their questioning of students, which makes up a large part of the student-teacher interaction (Gale & Cosgrove, 2004). These researchers, through analysis of very specific teacher-student exchanges, explore the power dynamics revealed in this questioning, as the teacher maintains her position of power as she gives the student a series of questions to which (she) already knows the answers. In this particular instance, the focus of the questions is concerned with eliciting responses from the student that the teacher then examines for their grammatical and pronunciation accuracy in a rather demeaning way. The researchers find that this particular type of "teacher talk" devalues and disempowers the students because of the focus on the "wrong" words they say, rather than values and empowers because of what they do know—taking away their confidence as speakers. In summary, they show how, in a classroom, many things teachers say—by virtue of

POINT *of* VIEW

English is spoken in many different ways around the world by native speakers of English, and there are even more nonnative speakers of English. How important is it to learn to listen to the many different world Englishes to be a better intercultural communicator?

There are now many times more nonnative speakers of English in the world than there are native speakers of English, and the gap is likely to widen. But higher education is heading in that direction much faster than are most Midwestern towns. [. . .]

The question is, do such academic breakdowns happen because universities aren't doing enough to prepare international teaching assistants for the classroom, or because American undergraduates, the beleaguered consumers themselves, simply tune out when faced with someone who is sufficiently different from them? [. . .]

In 1988 Donald L. Rubin, a professor of education and speech communication at the University of Georgia, began toying with an experimental model that would occupy him for the next several years: He gathered American undergraduates inside a classroom and then played a taped lecture for them over high-fidelity speakers. The lecture—an introduction to the Mahabharata, say, or a discourse on the growing scarcity of helium—was delivered in the voice of a man from central Ohio.

While the undergraduates sat and listened, they faced an image projected onto the classroom wall in front of them: Half the time, it was a photograph of an American man ("John Smith from Portland"), standing at a chalkboard and staring back at them. For the other half of the testing groups, the slide projected before them was that of an Asian man ("Li Wenshu from Beijing"), standing at the same chalkboard. The two figures were dressed, posed, and groomed as similarly as possible.

Now for the interesting part: When the students were asked to fill in missing words from a printed transcript of the central Ohioan's taped speech, they made 20 percent more errors when staring at the Asian man's image than they did when staring at a picture of "John Smith."

What did that mean? [. . .]

"All the pronunciation improvement in the world," he says, "will not by itself halt the problem of students' dropping classes or complaining about their instructors' language." [. . .]

Mr. Rubin, however, prefers to think of the issue in terms of prerequisites—worldly listening skills are a requirement for graduation. "I consider the ability to listen to and comprehend world Englishes a prerequisite to success in a wide variety of enterprises."

Source: From J. Gravois, "Teaching Impediment: When the Student Can't Understand the Instructor, Who Is to Blame?" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 8, 2005, pp. A10, A11, A12.

their position—would be deemed completely "out of line" if said by students, by virtue of their position. This might never be stated explicitly, but is learned through what is commonly referred to as schooling's "hidden curriculum" (Gale & Cosgrove, 2004). Both these studies show, through in-depth contextual analysis, that what we do with words affects many of our important relationships.

Many research studies have examined the rules for the use of socially situated language in specific contexts. They attempt to identify contexts and then "discover" the rules that apply in these contexts for a given speech community. Researchers Jack Daniel and Geneva Smitherman (1990) studied the communication dynamics in black churches. They first identified the priorities among congregation members: unity between the spiritual and the material, the centrality of religion, the harmony of nature and the universe, and the participatory, interrelatedness of life. They then described a basic communication format, the call-response, in both the traditional religious context and secular life contexts. In church, the speaker and audience interact, with sermons alternating with music. In secular life, call-response takes the form of banter between the rapper (rhetor) and others in the social group.

Daniel and Smitherman (1990) go on to discuss problems that can occur in black–white communication:

> *When the Black person is speaking, the white person, because call-response is not in his cultural heritage, obviously does not engage in the response process, remaining relatively passive, perhaps voicing an occasional, subdued, "mmmmmmmmhm." Judging from the white individual's seeming lack of involvement in the communication, the Black communicator gets the feeling that the white isn't listening to him . . . and the white person gets the feeling that the Black person isn't listening because he keeps interrupting. (p. 39)*

People communicate differently in different speech communities. Thus, the context in which the communication occurs is a significant part of the meaning. Although we might communicate in one way in one speech community, we might change our communication style in another. Understanding the dynamics of various speech communities helps us see the range of communication styles.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE

Recall that discourse refers to language in use. This means that all discourse is social. The language used—the words and the meanings that are communicated—depends not only on the context but also on the social relations that are part of that interaction. For example, bosses and workers may use the same words, but the meanings communicated are not always the same. A boss and a worker may both refer to the company personnel as a "family." To the boss, this may mean "one big happy family," whereas to a disgruntled employee, it may mean a "dysfunctional family." To some extent, the disparity is related to the inequality between boss and worker, to the power differential.

In Chapter 2, we introduced communication accommodation theory. There are different ways that people accommodate or resist accommodating, depending on the situation. One such theory that encompasses various approaches is co-cultural communication, which we examine next.

Co-Cultural Communication

co-cultural groups Nondominant cultural groups that exist in a national culture, such as African American or Chinese American.

The co-cultural communication theory, proposed by communication scholar Mark Orbe (1998), describes how language works between dominant and nondominant groups—or **co-cultural groups.** Groups that have the most power (whites, men, heterosexuals) consciously or unconsciously formulate a communication system that supports their perception of the world. This means that co-cultural group members (ethnic minorities, women, gays) must function in communication systems that often do not represent their experiences. Nondominant groups thus find themselves in dialectical struggles: Do they try to adapt to the dominant communication style, or do they maintain their own styles? Women in large male-dominated corporations often struggle with these issues. Do they adapt a male corporate style of speaking, or do they assert their own style?

In studying how communication operates with many different dominant and co-cultural groups, Orbe has identified three general orientations: nonassertive, assertive, and aggressive. Within each of these orientations, co-cultural individuals may emphasize assimilation, accommodation, or separation in relation to the dominant group. These two sets of orientations result in nine types of strategies (Table 6-2). The strategy chosen depends on many things, including preferred outcome, perceived costs and rewards, and context. These nine types of strategies vary from nonassertive assimilation, in which co-cultural individuals emphasize commonalities and avert controversy, to nonassertive separation, in which they avoid or maintain interpersonal barriers. Assertive assimilation strategies include manipulating stereotypes; assertive accommodation strategies include educating others, using liaisons, and communicating self. Aggressive assimilation involves strategies like ridiculing self and mirroring; aggressive accommodating involves confronting others; and aggressive separation involves attacking or sabotaging others.

The point here is that there are both costs and benefits for co-cultural members when they choose which of these strategies to use. Because language is structured in ways that do not reflect their experiences, they must adopt some strategy for dealing with the linguistic framework. For example, if Mark wants to refer to his relationship with Kevin, does he use the word *boyfriend*, *friend*, *roommate*, *husband*, *partner*, or some other word? If Mark and Kevin were married where it is legal, (e.g., Massachusetts, Canada, Belgium), should they refer to their "husband" when they are in places that explicitly say they do not recognize same-sex marriages from elsewhere, (e.g., Arizona, Michigan, Texas, or Colorado)? What about work? Thanksgiving dinner with the family? Let's look at how these strategies might work, the costs and the benefits of them.

TABLE 6-2 CO-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION ORIENTATIONS

	Separation	Accommodation	Assimilation
Nonassertive	Avoiding	Increasing visibility	Emphasizing commonalities
	Maintaining interpersonal barriers	Dispelling stereotypes	Developing positive face
			Censoring self
			Averting controversy
Assertive	Communicating self	Communicating self	Extensive preparation
			Overcompensating
	Intragroup networking	Intragroup networking	Manipulating stereotypes
			Bargaining
	Exemplifying strengths	Using liaisons	
		Educating others	
	Embracing stereotypes		
Aggressive	Attacking	Confronting	Dissociating
	Sabotaging others	Gaining advantage	Mirroring
			Strategic distancing
			Ridiculing self

Source: From M. Orbe, *Constructing Co-Cultural Theory: An Explication of Culture, Power, and Communication* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998), p. 110.

Assimilation Strategies The three assimilation strategies are nonassertive, assertive, and aggressive. Some co-cultural individuals tend to use nonassertive assimilation strategies. These strategies emphasize trying to fit and be accepted by the dominant group. This strategy might be taken if the individual perceives that it is important not to "make waves" in this context. For example, in some work situations, people may benefit by keeping their jobs and feeling more accepted by co-workers. If these individuals hear the boss using sexist language, being insensitive to other religious holidays, joking about gays/lesbians, and so on, they may keep quiet or pretend not to hear what the boss said. There are potential costs to this approach, because these co-cultural individuals may feel they cannot be honest about themselves and may also feel uncomfortable reinforcing the dominant group's worldview and power.

The second assimilation strategy is assertive assimilation. Co-cultural individuals taking this strategy may downplay co-cultural differences and try to fit

into the existing structures. Unlike the nonassertive assimilation strategy, this individual will try to fit in but also let people know how she or he feels from time to time. However, this strategy can promote an us-versus-them mentality, and some people find it difficult to maintain this strategy for very long.

The third assimilation strategy is aggressive assimilation. This strategy emphasizes fitting in, and co-cultural members who take this approach can go to great lengths to prove they are like members of the dominant group. Sometimes this means distancing themselves from other members of their co-culture, mirroring (dressing and behaving like the dominant group), or self-ridiculing. The benefit of this strategy is that the co-cultural member is not seen as "typical" of members of that co-culture. The cost may entail ridicule from members of that co-culture who may accuse this individual of acting white, thinking like a man, or "straight." This may lead to ostracizing of this person from the co-culture.

Accommodation Strategies Like assimilation strategies, there are three accommodation strategies: nonassertive, assertive, and aggressive. Nonassertive accommodation emphasizes blending into the dominant culture but tactfully challenging the dominant structure to recognize co-cultural practices. For example, a Jewish co-worker may want to put up a menorah near the company's Christmas tree as a way of challenging the dominant culture. By gently educating the organization about other religious holidays, the co-cultural member may be able to change their presumptions about everyone celebrating Christmas. Using this strategy, the co-cultural individual may be able to influence group decision making while still showing loyalty to the larger organization's goals. The cost of this strategy may be that others feel that she or he is not pushing hard enough to change larger structural issues in the organization. Also, this strategy does not really promote major changes in organizations to make them more inclusive and reflective of the larger society.

Assertive accommodation tries to strike a balance between the concerns of co-cultural and dominant group members. These strategies involve communicating self, doing intragroup networking, using liaisons, and educating others. For example, Asian American co-workers may share information about themselves with their co-workers, but they also share information about words that are offensive, such as *Oriental* and *slope*.

Aggressive accommodation strategies involve moving into the dominant structures and then working from within to promote significant changes—no matter how high the personal cost. Although it may seem as if co-cultural workers who use these strategies are confrontational or self-promoting, they also reflect a genuine desire to work with and not against dominant group workers. For example, a disabled co-worker may consistently remind others that facilities need to be more accessible, such as door handles, bathrooms that can accommodate wheelchairs, and so on.

Separation Strategies The three types of separation strategies are nonassertive, assertive, and aggressive. Nonassertive separation strategies are often used by those who assume that some segregation is part of everyday life in the United

States. For those in dominant groups, it is easier to live, work, learn, socialize, and pray with those who are like them. For co-cultural group members, it may take more effort to live as much as possible among those like them. So although it may not be possible for gay people to live only in a gay world, they can try to socialize as much as possible with other gays. The benefit of this approach is that co-cultural members do not have to deal with any negative feelings or stereotypes about their group, but the cost is that they cannot network and make connections with those in power positions.

Assertive separation strategies are used when a more conscious decision is made to maintain distance between dominant and co-cultural group members. Typical strategies my include stressing strengths and embracing stereotypes, as well as intragroup networking. One of the benefits of this approach, like the nonassertive separation strategy, is that it promotes co-cultural unity and self-determination. The cost, however, is that co-cultural group members must try to survive without having access to resources controlled by the dominant group.

Aggressive separation strategies are used by those who feel that is a high priority for dominant group or co-cultural group members. These strategies can include criticizing, attacking, and sabotaging others. The benefit of this approach for co-cultural members is that it enables them to confront pervasive, everyday, assumed discriminatory practices and structures. The cost may be that the dominant group retaliates against this open exposure of the presumed way of doing things.

Again, when confronted with various situations, dominant and co-cultural group members need to think carefully about how they wish to respond. There are benefits and costs to all of the decisions made. Although dominant group members are likely to be less harmed than co-cultural group members, everyone may suffer in the end. If Miguel is "cut out of the loop" at work and not told about an important meeting that affects his job, how should he handle this situation? He could pursue an assertive accommodation strategy and remind his co-workers that he needs to be included by pointing out when he is excluded. This could work and produce a more inclusive work environment, or the exclusion may continue because he is ignored. Or he could adopt a more aggressive accommodation strategy and meet with the manager and insist he be included. What are the costs and benefits of this approach? There are no easy answers, but it is important to consider what verbal communication strategy you may want to use when interacting in intercultural communication situations.

Discourse and Social Structure

Just as organizations have particular structures and specific positions within them, societies are structured so that individuals occupy social positions. Differences in **social positions** are central to understanding intercultural communication. For one thing, not all positions within the structure are equivalent; everyone is not the same. When men whistle at an attractive woman walking

social positions The places from which people speak that are socially constructed and thus embedded with assumptions about gender, race, class, age, social roles, sexuality, and so on.

by, it has a different force and meaning than if women were to whistle at a man walking by.

Power is a central element, by extension, of this focus on social position. For instance, when a judge in court says what he or she thinks *freedom of speech* means, it carries much greater force than when a neighbor or a classmate gives an opinion about what the phrase means. When we communicate, we tend to note (however unconsciously) the group membership and positions of communication participants. To illustrate, consider the previous example. We understand how communication functions, based on the group membership of the judge (as a member of the judicial system) and of the neighbors and classmates; we need know nothing about their individual identities.

Groups also hold different positions of power in the social structure. Because intercultural contact occurs between members of different groups, the positions of the groups affect communication. Group differences lend meaning to intercultural communication because, as noted previously, the concept of differences is key to language and the semiotic process.

The "Power" Effects of Labels

We often use labels to refer to other people and to ourselves. Labels, as signifiers, acknowledge particular aspects of our social identity. For example, we might label ourselves or others as "male" or "female," indicating sexual identity. Or we might say we are "Canadian" or a "New Englander," indicating a national or regional identity. The context in which a label is used may determine how strongly we feel about the label. On St. Patrick's Day, for example, someone may feel more strongly about being an Irish American than about being a woman or a student or a Texan.

Sometimes people feel trapped or misrepresented by labels. They might complain, "Why do we have to have labels? Why can't I just be me?" These complaints belie the reality of the function of discourse. It would be nearly impossible to communicate without labels. People rarely have trouble when labeled with terms they agree with—for example, "man," "student," "Minnesotan," or "Australian." Trouble arises, however, from the use of labels that they don't like or that they feel describe them inaccurately. Think about how you feel when someone describes you using terms you do not like.

Labels communicate many levels of meaning and establish particular kinds of relationships between speaker and listener. Sometimes people use labels to communicate closeness and affection for others. Labels like "friend," "lover," and "partner" communicate equality. Sometimes people intentionally invoke labels to establish a hostile relationship. Labels like "white trash" and "redneck" intentionally communicate inequality. Sometimes people use labels that are unintentionally offensive to others.

Many times, these labels are spoken without any knowledge or understanding of their meanings, origin, or even current implications and can demonstrate prejudicial feelings (Cruz-Jansen, 2002). For example, many descendents of Spanish-speaking people living in the United States reject the

STUDENT VOICES

I was born in Mexico but immigrated into the U.S. I am extremely proud of my Mexican heritage, and I usually feel offended when my identity is not respected. I have a slight accent and occasionally when I go out and mispronounce something people crack jokes. They think that it is all in good humor but it can be offensive. People connect too many stereotypes to Hispanics; society must learn to stop stereotyping minorities. When this happens then everyone can truly be united and respected, without preconceived notions based off a person's race.

—Alejandro

My native language is Spanish. Since I was a little kid, I've been learning English so I already knew the language when I moved to the U.S. However, even to this day, I have trouble understanding slang. I feel uncomfortable when situations arise where I don't understand what is being said because of slang. . . . I think that when speaking with someone from another culture, specifically with someone who speaks (American) English as a second language, one must be more considerate toward that person's needs; e.g., speaking slower, repeating oneself if necessary, explaining and/or avoiding slang terms.

—Sergio

term "Hispanic" since it was a census term created by the U.S. government in 1970 to identify a group of people; it was never used by people to describe themselves. Similarly, "Oriental" is a term rejected by many Asians and Asian Americans, and "homosexual" communicates negative characteristics about the speaker and establishes distance between the speaker and listener. Similarly, many indigenous people reject the term "Native American"—saying that it is only used by white people—preferring their more specific tribal name or the terms "American Indian" or "Indian." Many prefer "First Nations" people—to underscore the fact that tribes are in fact nations, recognized by the U.S. government (Yellow Bird, 1999).

Discourse is tied closely to social structure, so the messages communicated through the use of labels depend greatly on the social position of the speaker. If the speaker and listener are close friends, then the use of particular labels may not lead to distancing in the relationship or be offensive. But if the speaker and listener are strangers, then these same labels might invoke anger or close the lines of communication.

Furthermore, if the speaker is in a position of power, then he or she has potentially an even greater impact. For example, when politicians use discourse that invokes racist, anti-Semitic, or other ideologies of intolerance, many people become concerned because of the influence they may have. These concerns were raised in the 2002 presidential elections in France over candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen, whose comments over the years have raised concerns about anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic discourse. Similar concerns have arisen over the political discourse of Austria's Joerg Haider and Louisiana's David Duke. Of course, political office is not the only powerful position from which to speak. Fundamentalist Christian leaders have caused concern with their antigay discourse.

POINT *of* VIEW

Chris Matthews, host of MSNBC's *Hardball*, explains how he came to realize he had an accent in an interview with Blake Miller of *Philadelphia Magazine*. How do you know if you have an accent?

I don't think I ever realized I had a Philadelphia accent until I was away for a while in college and I began to understand that we really did talk differently than most people. Then I went to work in Washington for my first job in the Senate, and I remember meeting some people from out West, from Utah, and I would say "wooder" and they would say "wah-ter." It was like I was talking to cowboys.

We're the only city on the East Coast that pronounces our R's. They don't do it in Boston, certainly. They don't do it in New York. But we do it in Philly. We are loyal to the R.

We add an extra syllable to words, like Act-a-me. It's the extra, unexplained syllable that I think is the heart of the Philadelphia accent. It separates us from the lesser forms out there.

Source: From "Accent on Chris Matthews," *Philadelphia Magazine*, September 2005, p. 100.

Judith and Tom collaborated on a study about reactions to labeling. We asked white students which of the following they preferred to be called: white, Caucasian, white American, Euro-American, European American, Anglo, or WASP. They did not favor such specific labels as "WASP" or "European American" but seemed to prefer a more general label like "white." We concluded that they probably had never thought about what labels they preferred to be called. As we noted in Chapter 5, the more powerful aspects of identity seem to go unnoticed; for many people, whiteness just "is," and the preferred label is a general one that does not specify origin or history. Individuals from powerful groups generally do the labeling of others; they themselves do not get labeled (Martin, Krizek, Nakayama, & Bradford, 1996). For example, when men are asked to describe their identities, they often forget to specify gender as part of their identity. Women, in contrast, often include gender as a key element in their identity. This may mean that men are the defining norm and that women exist in relation to this norm. We can see this in the labels we use for men and women and for people of color. We rarely refer to a "male physician" or a "white physician," but we do refer to a "female doctor" or a "black doctor."

This "invisibility" of being white may be changing. Apparently, whites are becoming increasingly more conscious of their white identity, which may change the practice of labeling. Perhaps as the white norm is challenged by changing demographics, by increased interaction in a more diverse United States, and by racial politics, more whites may think about the meaning of labels for their own group.

MOVING BETWEEN LANGUAGES

Multilingualism

People who speak two languages are often called **bilingual;** people who speak more than two languages are considered **multilingual.** Rarely do bilinguals speak both languages with the same level of fluency. More commonly, they prefer to use one language over another, depending on the context and the topic. Sometimes entire nations are bilingual or multilingual. Belgium, for example, has three national languages (Dutch, German, and French), and Switzerland has four (French, German, Italian, and Romansh).

bilingual The ability to speak two languages fluently or at least competently.

multilingual The ability to speak more than two languages fluently or at least competently.

On either the individual or the national level, multilinguals must engage in language negotiation. That is, they need to work out, whether explicitly or implicitly, which language to use in a given situation. These decisions are sometimes clearly embedded in power relations. For example, French was the court language during the reign of Catherine the Great in 18th-century Russia. French was considered the language of culture, the language of the elite, whereas Russian was considered a vulgar language, the language of the uneducated and the unwashed. Special-interest groups in many U.S. states, especially Arizona and California, have attempted to pass laws declaring English the official language. These attempts reflect a power bid to determine which language will be privileged.

Sometimes a language is chosen as a courtesy to others. For example, Tom joined a small group going to see the fireworks display at the Eiffel Tower on Bastille Day one year. (Bastille Day is a French national holiday, celebrated on July 14, to commemorate the storming of the Bastille prison in 1789 and the beginning of the French Revolution.) One woman in the group asked, "*Alors, on parle français ou anglais?*" ["Are we speaking French or English?"]. Because one man felt quite weak at English, French was chosen as the language of the evening.

The reasons that people become bilingual reflect trends identified in Chapter 1—changes that drive the need for intercultural communication. Bilingualism results from these imperatives, as people move from one country to another, as businesses expand into international markets, and so on. More personal imperatives also drive people to become bilingual. Alice Kaplan (1993), a French professor at Duke University, notes, "Speaking a foreign language is, for me and my students, a chance for growth, for freedom, a liberation from the ugliness of our received ideas and mentalities" (p. 211). Many people use foreign languages to escape from a legacy of oppression in their own languages.

Perhaps it is easier to think of language as a "prisonhouse," to borrow Fredric Jameson's (1972) metaphor. All of the semantic, syntactic, pragmatic, and phonetic systems are enmeshed in a social system from which there is no escape, except through the learning of another language. Consider the case of Sam Sue (1992), a Chinese American born and raised in Mississippi, who

explains his own need to negotiate these social systems—often riddled by stigmatizing stereotypes—by changing the way he speaks:

> *Northerners see a Southern accent as a signal that you're a racist, you're stupid, or you're a hick. Regardless of what your real situation is. So I reacted to that by adapting the way I speak. If you talked to my brother, you would definitely know he was from the South. But as for myself, I remember customers telling my dad, "Your son sounds like a Yankee." (p. 4)*

Among the variations in U.S. English, the southern accent unwittingly communicates many negative stereotypes. Escaping into another accent is, for some, the only way to escape the stereotypes.

Learning another language is never easy, but the rewards of knowing another language are immense. Language acquisition studies have shown that it is nearly impossible for individuals to learn the language of a group of people they dislike. For instance, Tom was talking to a student about meeting the program's foreign language requirement. The student said, "I can't take Spanish. I'm from California." When Tom said that he did not understand what she meant, she blurted that she hated Mexicans and wouldn't take Spanish under any circumstances. As her well-entrenched racism suggested, she would indeed never learn Spanish.

interlanguage A kind of communication that emerges when speakers of one language are speaking in another language. The native language's semantics, syntactics, pragmatics, phonetics, and language styles often overlap and create a third way of communicating.

An interesting linguistic phenomenon known as **interlanguage** has implications for the teaching and learning of other languages. Interlanguage refers to a kind of communication that emerges when speakers of one language are speaking in another language. The native language's semantics, syntactics, pragmatics, and phonetics often overlap into the second language and create a third way of communicating. For example, many English-speaking female students of German might say, "*Ich bin ein Amerikanerin*," which is incorrect German but is structured on the English way of saying, "I am an American." The correct form is "*Ich bin Amerikanerin.*" The insertion of "*ein*" reveals the English language overlap.

In his work on moving between languages, Tom has noted that this creation of other ways of communicating can offer ways of resisting dominant cultures. He notes that "the powerful potential of translation for discovering new voices can violate and disrupt the systemic rules of both languages" (Nakayama, 1997, p. 240). He gives the example of "*shiros*," which is used by some Japanese Americans to refer to whites. *Shiro* is the color white, and adding an *s* at the end is the English grammatical way to pluralize words. Tom explains,

> *Using the color for people highlights the overlay of the ideology of the English language onto Japanese and an odd mixing that probably would not make sense to people who speak only English or Japanese, or those who do not live in the spaces between them. (p. 242n)*

Different people react differently to the dialectical tensions of a multilingual world. Some work hard to learn other languages and other ways of communicating, even if they make numerous errors along the way. Others retreat into their familiar languages and ways of living. The dialectical tensions that arise over different languages and different systems of meaning are played out around the

world. But these dialectical tensions never disappear; they are always posing new challenges for intercultural communicators.

Translation and Interpretation

Because no one can learn all of the languages in the world, we must rely on translation and interpretation—two distinct but important means of communicating across language differences. The European Union (EU), for example, has a strict policy of recognizing all of the languages of its constituent members. Hence, many translators and interpreters are hired by the EU to help bridge the linguistic gaps.

Translation generally refers to the process of producing a written text that refers to something said or written in another language. The original language text of a translation is called the **source text;** the text into which it is translated is the **target text.**

translation The process of producing a written text that refers to something said or written in another language.

source text The original language text of a translation. (See also **target text.**)

target text The new language text into which the original language text is translated. (See also **source text.**)

Interpretation refers to the process of verbally expressing what is said or written in another language. Interpretation can either be simultaneous, with the interpreter speaking at the same time as the original speaker, or consecutive, with the interpreter speaking only during the breaks provided by the original speaker.

interpretation The process of verbally expressing what is said or written in another language.

As we know from language theories, languages are entire systems of meaning and consciousness that are not easily rendered into another language in a word-for-word equivalence. The ways in which different languages convey views of the world are not equivalent, as we noted previously. Consider the difficulty involved simply in translating names of colors. The English word *brown* might be translated as any of these French words, depending on how the word is used: *roux*, *brun*, *bistre*, *bis*, *marron*, *jaune*, and *gris* (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1977, p. 261).

Issues of Equivalency and Accuracy Some languages have tremendous flexibility in expression; others have a limited range of words. The reverse may be true, however, for some topics. This slippage between languages is both aggravating and thrilling for translators and interpreters. Translation studies traditionally have tended to emphasize issues of **equivalency** and accuracy. That is, the focus, largely from linguistics, has been on comparing the translated meaning with the original meaning. However, for those interested in the intercultural communication process, the emphasis is not so much on equivalence as on the bridges that people construct to cross from one language to another.

equivalency An issue in translation, the condition of being equal in meaning, value, quantity, and so on.

Many U.S. police departments are now hiring officers who are bilingual, because they must work with a multilingual public. In Arizona, like many other states, Spanish is a particularly important language. Let's look at a specific case in which a police detective for the Scottsdale (Arizona) Police Department explained an unusual phrase:

> *Detective Ron Bayne has heard his share of Spanish phrases while on the job. But he recently stumped a roomful of Spanish-speaking police officers with an unusual expression.*

STUDENT VOICES

I would love to travel and experience all there is to experience. I think I would experience some culture shock because that is natural. I would want to learn some of the language that the country I would be going to speaks. I think that is extremely important because I should not expect everyone or anyone to speak my language. Seeing as how I am in their country, I should try to speak their language.

—Nate

I have learned some Spanish. I think that it is difficult to learn a new language when you are so set in your own language. I think it would be best to learn a second language when you are young.

—James

> *A suspect said,* "Me llevaron a tocar el piano" *[They took me to play the piano].*
>
> *"I knew it couldn't mean that," said Bayne, a translator for the Scottsdale Police Department. "But I had no idea what it really meant." (Meléndez, 2002, p. B1)*

This slang term, popular with undocumented aliens, highlights the differences between "street" Spanish and classroom Spanish. It also points to the importance of context in understanding meaning. In this context, we know that the police did not take a suspect to play a piano. Instead, this suspect was saying that the police had fingerprinted him. The varieties of expression in Spanish reflect social class and other differences that are not always communicated through translation or interpretation.

Yet the context for interpreters and translators must also be recognized. The need for Spanish speakers in the U.S. Southwest represents only the tip of the "linguistic iceberg." The recent attacks on the World Trade Center have created another need for translators and interpreters:

> *The CIA is looking for a few good speakers of Pashto. And Farsi, Dari and Arabic, too.*
>
> *Backed with new funds from the White House in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the spy agency has embarked on an urgent mission to reinforce its depleted ranks of specialists in the languages and cultures of other central Asia nations.*
>
> *It is a part of the world the United States virtually ignored for the last decade. (Strobel, 2001)*

The changing context for intelligence work has changed the context for translators and interpreters as well, to say nothing of the languages that are highly valued. These issues, although beyond the scope of equivalency and accuracy, are an important part of the dynamic of intercultural communication.

The Role of the Translator or Interpreter We often assume that translators and interpreters are "invisible," that they simply render into the target language

POINT *of* VIEW

Translation can create amusing and interesting intercultural barriers. Consider the following translation experiences.

1. A Canadian importer of Turkish shirts destined for Quebec used a dictionary to help him translate into French the label "Made in Turkey." His final translation: "Fabriqué en Dinde." True, "dinde" means "turkey." But it refers to the bird, not the country, which in French is Turquie.
2. An Otis Engineering Corp. display at a Moscow exhibition produced as many snickers among the Russians as it did praise. Company executives were not happy to learn that a translator had rendered in Russian a sign identifying "completion equipment" as "equipment for orgasms."
3. Japan's Olfa Corp. sold knives in the United States with the warning "Caution: Blade extremely sharp. Keep out of children."
4. In one country, the popular Frank Perdue Co. slogan, "It takes a tough man to make a tender chicken," read in local language something akin to "It takes a sexually excited man to make a chicken affectionate."
5. One company in Taiwan, trying to sell diet goods to expatriates living there, urged consumers to buy its product to add "roughage" to their systems. The instructions claimed that a person should consume enough roughage until "your tool floats." Someone dropped the "s" from "stool."
6. How about the Hong Kong dentist who advertised "Teeth extracted by the latest Methodists."
7. Or the hotel in notoriously polluted Mexico City that proclaimed: "The manager has personally passed all the water served here."
8. General Motors Corp.'s promotion in Belgium for its car that had a "body by Fisher" turned out to be, in the Flemish translation, "corpse by Fisher."

Source: From Laurel Delaney, "8 Global Marketing Gaffes," 2002. http://www.marketingprofs.com/2/delany2.asp.

whatever they hear or read. The roles that they play as intermediaries, however, often regulate how they render the original. Tom believes that it is not always appropriate to translate everything that one speaker is saying to another, in exactly the same way, because the potential for misunderstanding due to cultural differences might be too great. Translation is more than merely switching languages; it also involves negotiating cultures. Writer Elisabeth Marx (1999) explains,

> *It is not sufficient to be able to translate—you have to comprehend the subtleties and connotations of the language. Walter Hasselkus, the German chief executive of Rover, gave a good example of this when he remarked: "When the British say*

> *that they have a 'slight' problem, I know that it has to be taken seriously." There are numerous examples of misunderstandings between American English and British English, even though they are, at root, the same language. (p. 95)*

It might be helpful to think of translators and interpreters as cultural brokers who must be highly sensitive to the contexts of intercultural communication.

We often assume that anyone who knows two languages can be a translator or an interpreter. Research has shown, however, that high levels of fluency in two languages do not necessarily make someone a good translator or interpreter. The task obviously requires the knowledge of two languages. But that's not enough. Think about all of the people you know who are native English speakers. What might account for why some of them are better writers than others? Knowing English, for example, is a prerequisite for writing in English, but this knowledge does not necessarily make a person a good writer. Because of the complex relationships between people, particularly in intercultural situations, translation and interpretation involve far more than linguistic equivalence, which traditionally has been the focus.

In his 1993 book *Contemporary Translation Theories*, linguist Edwin Gentzler speculates that the 1990s "might be characterized as experiencing a boom in translation theory" (p. 181). In part, this "boom" was fueled by a recognition that the traditional focus in translation studies is too limiting to explain the wide variety of ways that meanings might be communicated. Gentzler concludes, "With such insight, perhaps we will be less likely to dismiss that which does not fit into or measure up to our standards, and instead open ourselves to alternative ways of perceiving—in other words, to invite real intra- and intercultural communication" (p. 199).

The field of translation studies is rapidly becoming more central to academic inquiry as it moves from the fringes to an area of inquiry with far-reaching consequences for many disciplines. These developments will have a tremendous impact on how academics approach intercultural communication. Perhaps intercultural communication scholars will begin to play a larger role in the developments of translation studies.

LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

In the previous chapter, we discussed cultural identity and its complexities. One part of our cultural identity is tied to the language(s) that we speak. As U.S. Americans, we are expected to speak English. If we travel to Nebraska, we assume the people there speak English. When we travel around the world, we expect Russians to speak Russian, Koreans to speak Korean, and Indonesians to speak Indonesian. But things get more involved, as we noted in Chapter 4, when we consider why Brazilians speak Portuguese, Congolese speak French, and Australians speak English. The relationship between language and culture becomes more complicated when we look at the complexity of cultural identities at home and abroad.

Language and Cultural Group Identity

When Tom was at the Arizona Book Festival recently, a white man held up a book written in Chinese and asked Tom what it was about. "I don't read Chinese," Tom replied. "Well, you should," he retorted and walked away. Two assumptions seem to be at work here: (1) Anyone who looks Asian must be Chinese, and (2) Asian Americans should be able to speak their ancestral languages. This tension has raised important identity questions for Asian Americans. Writer Henry Moritsugu (1992), who was born and raised in Canada and who later immigrated to the United States, explains,

> *There is no way we could teach our children Japanese at home. We speak English. It wasn't a conscious effort that we did this. . . . It was more important to be accepted. . . . I wish I could speak the language better. I love Japanese food. I love going to Japanese restaurants. Sometimes I see Japanese groups enjoying themselves at karaoke bars . . . I feel definitely Western, more so than Asian. . . . But we look Asian, so you have to be aware of who you are. (p. 99)*

The ability to speak another language can be important in how people view their group membership.

Many Chicana/os also have to negotiate a relationship to Spanish, whether or not they speak the language. Communication scholar Jacqueline Martinez (2000) explains,

> *It has taken a long time for me to come to see and feel my own body as an ethnic body. Absent the capacity to express myself in Spanish, I am left to reach for less tangible traces of an ethnic self that have been buried under layers of assimilation into Anglo culture and practice. . . . Yet still there is a profoundly important way in which, until this body of mine can speak in Spanish, gesture in a "Spanishly" way, and be immersed in Spanish-speaking communities, there will remain ambiguities about its ethnic identification. (p. 44)*

Although some people who migrate to the United States retain the languages of their homelands, many other U.S. American families no longer speak the language of their forebears. Historically, bilingualism was openly discouraged in the United States. Writer Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) recalls how she was discouraged from speaking Spanish:

> *I remember being caught speaking Spanish at recess—that was good for three licks on the knuckles with a sharp ruler. I remember being sent to the corner of the classroom for "talking back" to the Anglo teacher when all I was trying to do was tell her how to pronounce my name. If you want to be American, speak "American." If you don't like it, go back to Mexico where you belong. (p. 53)*

Even today we often hear arguments in favor of making English the official language of the nation. The interconnections between cultural identity and language are indeed strong.

Another intersection between identity and language occurred in 2006, when a controversy arose over the release by some Latino pop stars of a Spanish version

POINT *of* VIEW

Languages develop in relation to their environments. Changes in the global climate are bringing vast changes to the environment of the Arctic regions. Note how the indigenous languages are working to adapt to these changes.

What are the words used by indigenous peoples in the Arctic for "hornet," "robin," "elk," "barn owl" or "salmon?"

If you don't know, you're not alone.

Many indigenous languages have no words for legions of new animals, insects and plants advancing north as global warming thaws the polar ice and lets forests creep over tundra.

"We can't even describe what we're seeing," said Sheila Watt-Cloutier, chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, which says it represents 155,000 people in Canada, Alaska, Greenland and Russia.

In the Inuit language Inuktitut, robins are known just as the "bird with the red breast," she said. Inuit hunters in north Canada recently saw some ducks but have not figured out what species they were, in Inuktitut or any other language.

[. . .]

In Arctic Europe, birch trees are gaining ground and Saami reindeer herders are seeing roe deer or even elk, a forest-dwelling cousin of moose, on former lichen pastures.

"I know about 1,200 words for reindeer—we classify them by age, sex, color, antlers," said Nils Isak Eira, who manages a herd of 2,000 reindeer in north Norway.

"I know just one word for elk—'sarvva'," said 50-year-old Eira. "But the animals are so unusual that many Saami use the Norwegian word 'elg.' When I was a child it was like a mythical creature."

Source: From A. Doyle, "As Ice Melts, Arctic People at Loss for Words." MSNBC, November 24, 2004. Available at http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6530026.

of the U.S. national anthem ("Star Spangled Banner"), with somewhat different lyrics ("The time has come to break the chains"), called *Nuestro Himno* (Our Anthem). For the song's producer and singers, it was about trying to help engage immigrants, as a tribute to the United States. For others, the national anthem was a symbol of unity that should be sung only in English. Here we see the importance of contexts. What many people don't know is that the national anthem was translated into Spanish (and many other languages) by the Bureau of Education and has been available in those languages since 1919—with no controversy until the issue becomes related to the current immigration debate (Goldstein, 2006).

What about the challenges facing cultural groups whose languages are nearing extinction? Whereas millions of people speak Chinese, Japanese, and Spanish, some languages are spoken by only a handful of people. One Osage Indian laments,

> *Even though I am painfully aware of what needs to be said and how to say it, my words usually fall upon noncomprehending ears, for only a handful of Osage Indians can speak or understand our tribal language. And, after each such occasion, I often silently lament that this may be the last time the Osage language is publicly spoken and that within a mere 10 years it might not ever be heard again. (quoted in Pratt & Buchanan, 2000, p. 155)*

Many Native American tribes are currently working to save their tribal languages, but they face enormous challenges. Yet it is their culture and identity that are at risk.

The languages we speak and the languages others think we should speak can create barriers in intercultural communication. Why might some U.S. Americans assume that someone whose ancestors came from China continues to speak Chinese, while someone whose ancestors came from Germany or Denmark is assumed to no longer speak German or Dutch? Here, again, we can see how identity, language, and history create tensions between who we think we are and who others think we are.

Code Switching

Code switching is a technical term in communication that refers to the phenomenon of changing languages, dialects, or even accents. People code switch for several reasons: (1) to accommodate the other speakers, (2) to avoid accommodating others, or (3) to express another aspect of their cultural identity.

code switching A technical term in communication that refers to the phenomenon of changing languages, dialects, or even accents.

Linguistics professor Jean-Louis Sauvage (2002) studied the complexity of code switching in Belgium, which involves not only dialects but languages as well. He explains the practical side of code switching:

> *For example, my house was built by a contractor who sometimes resorted to Flemish subcontractors. One of these subcontractors was the electrician. I spoke Dutch to him but had to use French words when I referred to technical notions that I did not completely understand even in French. This was not a problem for the electrician, who knew these terms in Dutch as well as in French but would have been unable to explain them to me in French. (p. 159)*

Given the complex language policies and politics in Belgium, code switching takes on particularly important political meaning. Who code switches and who does not is a frequent source of contestation.

In her work on code switching, communication scholar Karla Scott (2000) discusses how the use of different ways of communicating creates different cultural contexts and different relationships between the conversants. Based on a series of interviews with black women, she notes "the women's shared recognition that in markedly different cultural worlds their language use is connected to identity" (p. 246). She focuses on the use of the words *girl* and *look* as they relate to communicative practices in different contexts. She identifies three areas in which code switching occurs with *girl:* "(1) in discourse about differences between Black and White women's language use, (2) in discourse about being

with other Black women, and (3) in uses of '*girl*' as a marker in discourse among participants during the interview" (p. 241). The use of *look* in code switching occurs in three contexts as well: "(1) in discussions and descriptions of talking like a Black woman versus White women's talk, (2) in the women's reports of interactions with Whites, both male and female, and (3) in the women's reports of interactions with Black men" (p. 243). *Girl* creates a sense of solidarity and shared identity among black women, whereas *look* is particularly important in white-dominated contexts because it asserts a different identity. Thus, code switching between these two words reflects different ways of communicating and different identities and relationships among those communicating.

There are similar examples of code switching between English and Spanish, as increasing numbers of U.S. Americans speak both languages—18 million now according to the U.S. census (Silverstein, 2007). Scholar Holly Cashman (2005) investigated how a group of bilingual women code switched during a game of *lotería* (Mexican bingo). She makes the point that code switching does not just demonstrate linguistic competence but, as in Scott's (2000) study, also communicates important information about ethnic identities and social position. Throughout the game, the women's choices to speak Spanish and/or English demonstrated various identifications and social places. When they preferred to speak Spanish, they were identifying inclusively with both English and Spanish speakers. In correcting other's language choices, they were also identifying as not just bilingual, but as arbiters of the spoken language. And in rejecting others' corrections of their language use, they were also asserting certain identifications, as when one woman in refusing another's correction of her Spanish "categorizes herself as 'Chicana,' bringing about a bilingual, oppositional social identity, and rejecting the social structures previously talked into being" (p. 313).

This discussion of code switching and language settings brings up the question of how does a bilingual person decide which language to speak in a setting where there are multiple languages spoken? Is it rude to switch between two languages when some people in the room only understand one language? As our student Liz describes (in the Student Voice box), this is not always an easy question to answer. A helpful theory here is Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), discussed in Chapter 2. As you might remember, this theory posits that in some situations individuals change their communication patterns to accommodate others—depending on the situation and the attitude of the speaker toward other people. So, for example, if the situation is a neutral one and the speaker feels positively toward others, they will more likely accommodate others. This seems to be the case in Liz's family. Her father instructed her to accommodate everyone in the situation. Liz's experience at a recent party was different. Here, the Serbian speakers did not want to accommodate Liz. At the Salsa party, she tried to accommodate everyone, but it was difficult and her friends did not follow her lead. What is important to remember is that the outcome of accommodation is usually a positive feeling. However, in some situations (like high threat) speakers may not want to accommodate, may even want to accentuate their linguistic differences, or perhaps, as in Liz's Salsa party experience, the effort of accommodating is too challenging.

STUDENT VOICES

Is it rude to code switch between languages when someone in the room only understands one of the languages?

Growing up in a household that predominately spoke Spanish was challenging when I brought friends over. Not everyone in my family spoke English and not all of my friends spoke Spanish. For as long as I can remember, my father expected me to translate everything that my friends and I said when family members were around us, even if they were not a part of the conversation. My father instilled the importance of respecting people around me by ensuring that everyone was included in the conversation, and to be sensitive to those around me who do not understand the language by giving them a general idea of what was being said.

As I have gotten older, I wonder when is it appropriate to switch languages when someone in the room does not understand the language being spoken. The first time that I really thought about this was when I attended a dinner at a friend's house. All of the people, excluding myself, were from Serbia. When one of the guests realized that I did not speak Serbian, she said, "Oh, so we will have to speak English all night?" My immediate reaction was that I did not think that everyone had to adjust to my needs. After all, this was their time to share food and conversations in their language.

However, I recently went Salsa dancing with a friend who did not speak Spanish. Knowing that most of the people around us were bilingual, I asked people if they could speak in English so that we did not exclude my friend. Most people would start speaking in English, but then break out into conversations in Spanish, which frustrated me. I ended up interpreting conversations for him and felt bad that he was excluded from the conversation. As I apologized to him, my friend said, "Don't feel bad. It is my fault that I do not speak Spanish."

Reflecting on these situations, I wondered when is it appropriate to code switch between languages when someone in the room only understands one of the languages? Why did I not think it was offensive in a situation where I was the one who did not understand and offensive when it was a friend of mine who did not?

—Liz

LANGUAGE POLITICS AND POLICIES

Nations can enact laws recognizing an official language, such as French in France or Irish in Ireland (despite the fact that more Irish speak English than Irish). Some nations have multiple official languages. For instance, Canada has declared English and French to be the official languages. Here in the United States, there is no official national language, although English is the de facto national language. Yet the state of Hawai'i has two official languages, English

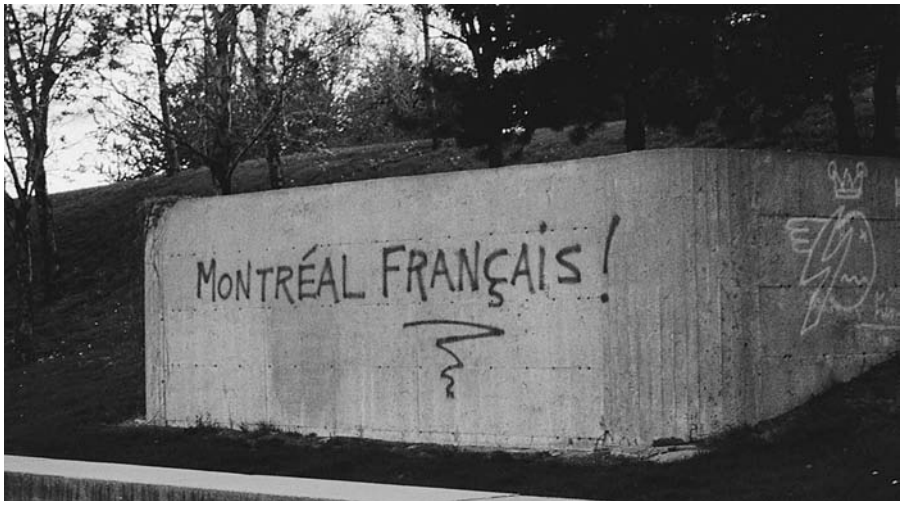


FIGURE 6-2 Tensions between English and French speakers—shown by this photo taken near Montreal's Olympic Stadium—have led to the creation of language policies in Quebec. Some U.S. states have attempted to implement language policies as "English-only" laws. Do these language policies reduce or exacerbate intercultural communication problems? Why do some languages face more difficulty in their survival than others? (*Courtesy T. K. Nakayama*)

and Hawaiian. Other U.S. entities have also declared official languages, such as Guam (Chamorro and English), New Mexico (English and Spanish), and Samoa (English and Samoan). Laws or customs that determine which language is spoken where and when are referred to as **language policies.** These policies often emerge from the politics of language use. As mentioned previously, the court of Catherine the Great of Russia used not Russian but French, which was closely tied to the politics of social and economic class. The history of colonialism also influences language policies. Thus, Portuguese is the official national language of Mozambique, and English and French are the official national languages of Cameroon. (See Figure 6-2.)

language policies Laws or customs that determine when and where which language will be spoken.

Language policies are embedded in the politics of class, culture, ethnicity, and economics. They do not develop as a result of any supposed quality of the language itself. There are different motivations behind the establishment of language policies that guide the status of different languages in a place. Sometimes nations decide on a national language as part of a process of driving people to assimilate into the national culture. If the state wishes to promote assimilation, language policies that encourage everyone to speak the official language and conduct business in that language are promoted. One such group, U.S. English, Inc., has been advocating for the establishment of English as the official language of the United States.

Sometimes nations develop language policies as a way of protecting minority languages so these languages do not disappear. Welsh in Wales is one

example, but Irish in Ireland and Frisian in Germany and the Netherlands are legally protected languages. Some language policies recognize the language rights of its citizens wherever they are in the nation. One example of this is Canada (English and French). Another is Kenya (Swahili and English). Government services are available in either language throughout the nation.

Other language policies are governed by location. In Belgium, Dutch (Flemish) is the official language in Flanders in the north part of the country. French is the official language in Wallonia in the South, and German is the official language in the Eastern Cantons bordering Germany. Thus, if you are boarding a train to go from Antwerp to Liège, you would need to look for "Luik" in the Antwerp train station. When you returned to the train station in Liège to go back, you would look for the train to "Anvers." The signs would not be posted in both languages, except in the Brussels-Capital region (the only bilingual part of the nation).

In Quebec, Canada, Law 101—passed in the early 1980s—required all Quebec students to attend French-speaking schools (unless their parents went to an English-speaking school in Quebec). So lots of immigrants from all over the world, few of whom spoke French, were required to attend French-speaking schools. Years later, these former students talked about this experience and how this law is changing Quebec. It's creating a more multicultural identity in contrast to previous years when most immigrants would choose English, leaving French to be spoken only by a small, relatively isolated group (Roy, 2007).

Sometimes language policies are developed with language parity, but the implementation is not equal. In Cameroon, for example, English and French are both official languages, although 247 indigenous languages are also spoken. Although Germany was the initial colonizer of Cameroon, Britain and France took over in 1916—with most of the territory going to France—and these "new colonial masters then sought to impose their languages in the newly acquired territory" (Echu, 2003, p. 34). At independence in 1960, French Cameroon established French as its official language and English became the official language in the former British Cameroon areas once they joined together to form Cameroon. Once united in 1961, Cameroon established both languages as official languages. Because French speakers are far more numerous than English speakers, "French has a de facto dominance over English in the areas of administration, education and the media. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that French influence as expressed in language, culture and political policy prevails in all domains" (p. 39). So although Cameroon is officially bilingual, French dominates in nearly all domains, because most of the people are French speakers. Thus, "what appears to be a language policy for the country is hardly clearly defined, in spite of the expressed desire to promote English-French bilingualism and protect the indigenous languages" (p. 44). European colonialism has left its mark in this African nation, and the language policy and language realities remain to be worked out.

We can view the development of language policies as reflecting the dialectical tensions between the nation's history and its future, between the various language communities, and between economic and political relations inside and outside the nation. Language policies can help resolve or exacerbate these tensions.

POINT *of* VIEW

After interviewing many bilinguals, this author provides some general guidelines to help bilinguals know when to code switch.

CONVERSING IS NO SIMPLE MATTER FOR THE BILINGUAL

Cuban-born Maria Carreira, the co-author of two college Spanish textbooks, can glide easily between her native tongue and English. But in her daily life in Southern California, picking which language to speak can be very complicado. *Such as the time when she was at a taco stand where everyone seemed to be ordering and chatting in Spanish. Carreira started placing her order* en espanol, *but she quickly switched to English after she got a look at the young employee behind the counter. "He had the bluest eyes," Carreira said. . . . Although the counterman responded in English, it dawned on her that he had been capably handling orders in Spanish. Yet her flub reflects a language-etiquette question confronted daily by the nation's growing ranks of English-Spanish bilinguals: When to use ingles and when to speak Spanish? . . . Still, among the estimated 18 million Americans proficient in both languages, according to the U.S. Census in September, the issue isn't whether to speak English or Spanish, but when. There's the delicate matter of courtesy—and avoiding bruised feelings. Occasionally, Carreira said, "it's a land mine." For example, switching to Spanish might seem rude if it suggests the other speaker is inept in English. Yet among Hispanics proud of their ethnic heritage, completely avoiding Spanish can come across as standoffish. Experts such as Carreira say the language decision among bilinguals is often made in a split second, based on cues such as age, clothing and apparent social status—along with skin, eye and hair color. Names can be giveaways—or traps. When University of California, Los Angeles student Maricruz Cecena introduced herself with a friendly hola to one of her freshman-year dormitory roommates, Laura Sanchez, and then tried to strike up a phone conversation in Spanish, all she got was an earful of English . . . . Sanchez can get by fairly well in Spanish but is much more comfortable in English, which was the primary language in her upper-middle-class Mexican-American home. She said she sometimes is intimidated by friends and acquaintances who speak Spanish better than she does. . . .*

LANGUAGE AND GLOBALIZATION

In a world in which people, products, and ideas can move easily around the globe, rapid changes are being made in the languages spoken and learned. Globalization has sparked increased interest in some languages while leaving others to disappear.

The dream of a common international language has long marked Western ways of thinking. Ancient Greeks viewed the world as filled with Greek speakers or those who were *barbaroi* (barbarians). The Romans attempted to establish

As with all etiquette, making the other person comfortable is key.

K. C. McAlpin recalls making small talk recently with a night-crew janitor from Central America who was working at his office. The conversation started in English, but McAlpin, who grew up in Texas and worked in Latin America in the 1970s, decided to help the janitor when "she got hung up on some word." The conversation then resumed in Spanish. . . .

Although Carreira regrets the incident with the blue-eyed counterman, she has a finely honed sense of Spanish-English etiquette that leads her to use Spanish sparingly in public, unless she is approached in Spanish. . . . *Say Carreira needs directions and bumps into somebody who appears Hispanic. She'll ask in English and stick with the language even if the other person speaks with a heavy accent. Switching quickly to Spanish, Carreira reasons, would be "sort of saying, 'Huh, I get it. You can't speak English.' " But by refusing to speak Spanish, "you also risk coming across as aloof or superior, more Americanized, or not one of them," she said. The solution? Carreira will* continue an exchange in English to avoid insult but will toss in a well-pronounced gracias or por favor as "a way of being gracious and showing solidarity."

Among Hispanics, trying a little Spanish sometimes can defuse hostility. . . . *English-speakers struggling to use a few words of Spanish can, in some circumstances, come across very well. . . . But all too often, . . . English-speakers offend with fractured "mock Spanish" that [can be] considered racist—including "no problemo" and "comprendee?" . . .*

Source: From S. Silverstein, "Conversing Is No Simple Matter for the Bilingual, *Los Angeles Times*, November 15, 2007.

Latin and Greek, which led to the subsequent establishment of Latin as the learned language of Europe. Latin was eventually replaced by French, which was spoken, as we have noted, throughout the elite European communities and became the **lingua franca** of Europe. More recently, Esperanto was created as an international language, and although there are Esperanto speakers, it has not attained wide international acceptance. Today, Ancient Greek and Latin, as well as French, still retain some of their elite status, but "English is the de facto language of international communication today" (Tsuda, 1999, p. 153).

lingua franca A commonly shared language that is used as a medium of communication between people of different languages.

Many native English speakers are happy with the contemporary status of the language. They feel much more able to travel around the world, without the burden of having to learn other ways of communicating, given that many people around the world speak English. Having a common language also facilitates intercultural communication, but it can also create animosity among those who must learn the other's language. Dominique Noguez (1998) explains,

In these language affairs, as in many other moral or political affairs—tolerance, for example—is the major criteria for reciprocity. Between comparable

POINT *of* VIEW

Harumi Befu, emeritus professor at Stanford University, discusses the consequences of English domination for monolingual Americans.

> *Instead of language enslavement and intellectual imperialism, however, one more often is told of the benefit of learning a second language, such as English. For example, non-native English speakers can relativize their own language and appreciate each language on its own terms. It was Goethe who said that one who does not know a foreign language does not know his/her own language. . . .*
>
> *Thanks to the global dominance of their country, American intellectuals have acquired the "habitus" (Bourdieu) of superiority, whereby they exercise the license of expressing their thoughts in English wherever they go instead of showing respect to locals through expending efforts to learn their language. This privileged position, however, spells poverty of the mind.*
>
> *For their minds are imprisoned in a single language; they are unable to liberate their minds through relativizing English. In short, other things being equal, monolingual Americans (not all Americans are monolingual) are the most provincial and least cosmopolitan among those who traffic in the global interlinguistic community—a price they pay for the strength of the country backing them.*

Source: From H. Befu, "English Language Intellectual Imperialism and Its Consequences," *Newsletter: Intercultural Communication*, 37 (Intercultural Communication Institute, Kanda University of International Studies, Japan), June 2000, p. 1.

> *languages and equal countries, this must be: I speak and learn your language and you speak and learn mine. Otherwise, it's sadomasochism and company—the sadist being simply the one with the gall to say to another: "I am not speaking your language, therefore speak mine!" This is what Anglo-Saxons have been happily doing since at least 1918. (p. 234)*

(En ces affaires de langue, comme en bien d'autres affaires morales ou politiques—la tolérance, par exemple—le critère majeur, c'est la réciprocité. Entre langues comparables et pays égaux, ce devrait être: je parle et enseigne votre langue et vous parlez et enseignez la mienne. Autrement, c'est sadomasochisme et compagnie—le sadique étant tout simplement celui qui l'aplomb de declarer à l'autre: "Je ne parle pas votre langue, parlez donc la mienne!" C'est ce que font, avec assez de bonheur, les Anglo-Saxons depuis au moins 1918.)

Learning a foreign language is never easy, of course, but the dominance of English as the lingua franca raises important issues for intercultural communication.

What is the relationship between our four touchstones and this contemporary linguistic situation? That is, how do culture, communication, power, and context play out in the domination of English? First, the intimate connections between language and culture mean that the diffusion of English is tied to the

POINT *of* VIEW

Colonial histories have influenced how people communicate. In Brazil, colonialists developed their own language to communicate across the many indigenous communities they colonized. Although imposed by colonists, today this general language is used to resist domination by Portuguese. How does a language serve political ends? What are the politics of speaking English in the world today?

When the Portuguese arrived in Brazil five centuries ago, they encountered a fundamental problem: the indigenous peoples they conquered spoke more than 700 languages. Rising to the challenge, the Jesuit priests accompanying them concocted a mixture of Indian, Portuguese and African words they called "língua geral," or the "general language," and imposed it on their colonial subjects.

Elsewhere in Brazil, língua geral as a living, spoken tongue died off long ago. But in this remote and neglected corner of the Amazon where Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela meet, the language has not only managed to survive, it has made a remarkable comeback in recent years. [. . .]

Two years ago, in fact, Nheengatú, as the 30,000 or so speakers of língua geral call their language, reached a milestone. By vote of the local council, São Gabriel da Cachoeira became the only municipality in Brazil to recognize a language other than Portuguese as official, conferring that status on língua geral and two local Indian tongues.

As a result, Nheengatú, which is pronounced neen-gah-TOO and means "good talk," is now a language that is permitted to be taught in local schools, spoken in courts and used in government documents. People who can speak língua geral have seen their value on the job market rise and are now being hired as interpreters, teachers and public health aides. [. . .]

"Nheengatú came to us as the language of the conqueror," explained Renato da Silva Matos, a leader of the Federation of Indigenous Organizations of the Rio Negro. "It made the original languages die out" because priests and government officials punished those who spoke any language other than Portuguese or Nheengatú.

But in modern times, the language acquired a very different significance. As the dominion of Portuguese advanced and those who originally imposed the language instead sought its extinction, Nheengatú became "a mechanism of ethnic, cultural and linguistic resistance," said Persida Miki, a professor of education at the Federal University of Amazonas.

Source: From L. Rohter, "Language Born of Colonialism Thrives Again in Amazon," *New York Times*, August 28, 2005, p. A6.

spread of U.S. American culture around the world. Is this a new form of colonialism? If we consider issues of power, what role does the United States play in the domination of English on the world scene? How does this marginalize or disempower those who are not fluent in English in intercultural communication?

POINT *of* VIEW

WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE FRENCH?

This author argues (regretfully) that out of necessity, the United States needs to stop teaching so much French (and German) in high schools and colleges and concentrate more on other languages.

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 2008 the International Year of Languages. . . . The U.S. needs to establish a longer-range strategic emphasis on the study of cultures, and widespread educational use of languages, to prevent such crises from occurring in the first place. How do we achieve these goals? Should we restore and expand upon the pattern of high school and college language instruction that existed in my youth, when four times as many college students studied "foreign languages"? The present essay lays out a position to which I have gradually and grudgingly been arriving over my nearly 50-year career as a student and teacher of languages and cultures. I was spurred to express this position publicly by recent global and national initiatives in the area of language education but also by an e-mail I received nearly a year ago:

> I teach French, Spanish, and an Intro to World Languages class at a public middle school in a rural community in Virginia. . . . I understand the rise of Spanish in light of the USA's changing demographics, and the wave of Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese with regard to global commerce and homeland security, BUT WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE FRENCH? Do you believe the need for French in the American classroom will continue to decline and become obsolete?

What follows is my latest, fullest response to this question, which I have been pondering ever since. Despite this deep-seated allegiance, I do regretfully conclude that the recent and projected continuing decline of French as one of the most widely studied languages in the U.S. is both inevitable and appropriate. So where does that leave French? . . . The French-speaking world uses not only European French but also the Frenches of the Canadian Québecois and of the numerous former French colonies in Africa and on many islands around the world. Spanish, though instructors also need to recognize Spanish dialect diversity, is probably the only one of the Big Three that will remain in the top 10 in U.S. education by the end of the 21st century. Likely members by then include Arabic, Bengali, Hindi/Urdu, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, and Turkish.

Source: From H. S. Straight, 'But Where Does That Leave French?' *Inside Higher Ed. Com.* Retrieved May 9, 2008 from http://www.insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/views/2008/05/05/straight.

What kinds of resentment might be fostered by forcing people to recognize their disempowerment?

In what intercultural contexts is it appropriate to assume that others speak English? For English speakers, this is a particularly unique context. Latvians, for example, cannot attend international meetings and assume that others will speak

Latvian; and Albanians will have difficulty transacting international trade if they assume that others know their language.

This brings up the question of what languages U.S. Americans should be studying in order to communicate better with others in global contexts. For many years, the most studied languages in high schools and colleges in the United States were French, Spanish, and German (see the Point of View box "But Where Does That Leave French?"). However, some suggest that, in order for the United States to remain a key player on the global stage, its citizens should be studying Chinese and Arabic. Experts estimate that by the year 2015 China will have overtaken the United States as the predominant actor in the major power system (Kissane, 2005).

In his study of the developing use of English in Switzerland, Christof Demont-Heinrich (2005) focused on Switzerland in global and local contexts, cultural and national identity issues, power, and communication. The nation recognizes four national languages—French, German, Italian, and Romansh. Three of these are recognized as official languages—German, French, and Italian—which means that all national government materials are available in the three official languages. Some of the power differences among these language communities are reflected in the demographics from the 2000 census in which "63.9% of respondents named German, 19.5% listed French, 6.6% claimed Italian, and 0.5% named Romansch as their first language" (p. 72). In this context, English has become more influential, not only among the banking and financial sectors but increasingly in "consumer and pop culture" (p. 74). Recently, at the initiation of the Zürich canton, a proposal was made to allow English to be the first foreign language taught in school (rather than one of the national languages), and eight other German-speaking cantons quickly aligned themselves with this idea. The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education decided that by 2012 all Swiss students must study two foreign languages, but only one must be a national language. Given the value of English in the global economy and the use of English to communicate with other Swiss, one can see why there would be support for the Zürich position. Given the importance of Swiss national identity and their multilingual identity that is shaped by the languages spoken by other Swiss, one can also see why some French-speaking politicians preferred a policy where one of the other national languages would be the first foreign language. Zürich and other cantons are now proposing a ballot initiative that would "require just one foreign language to be taught, ideally English, at the primary school level" (p. 76), which would leave the other national language to be taught in secondary school. Demont-Heinrich concludes by noting that Romansh is likely headed for linguistic extinction, but what will happen to Switzerland? Can Swiss national identity be maintained with English? And what about the world? "Can such a colossal human social order sustain the diverse forms of human linguistic expression" (p. 81), or must humanity reduce its linguistic expression to a few dominant languages that facilitate economic trade? In the era of globalization, where economic growth is driven by external relations and trade, should we be studying Chinese?

INTERNET RESOURCES

http://anthro.palomar.edu/language/default.htm
This Web resource is an interactive guide to the relationships between language and culture. The site contains standard information on topics like "Language and Thought Processes." However, it also includes audio files that highlight regional differences in pronunciation and dialect.

www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/semiotic.html
This is an excellent resource for students seeking additional information on semiotics. This semiotics guide is complete with charts, easy-to-understand text, and lists of other resources. For those of you looking to write a paper using semiotics, the last chapter listed is a "do-it yourself" guide to semiotics analysis!

www.us-english.org/
www.lsadc.org/
These two Web sites contain very different views on the "English-only" issue in the United States. The group US English is a strong advocate for English-only within the United States. Its Web site contains lots of information about the group's legislative activities and political agenda. The second Web site is the home page of the Linguistic Society of America. This group was not formed to counter English-only policies, but it is a strong advocate of a multilingual society. The group's statement on language rights can be found at www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/saoghal/mion-chanain/LSA_statement.txt.

http://babelfish.altavista.digital.com/translate.dyn
This Web site is an example of one of the ways that technology is changing translation. The "Babel" feature, which can be added to Web content, translates from a great number of languages to a great number of languages. A similar feature is also available in the on-line community of Second Life. What opportunities and challenges does automated translation present for intercultural communication?

SUMMARY

- The social science approach focuses on individual aspects of language. The interpretive approach focuses on contextual aspects of language. The critical approach emphasizes the role of power in language use.
- There are different positions on the relationship between language and our perceptions. The nominalist position feels that our perception is not shaped by the language we speak. The relativist position argues that our perception is determined by the language we speak. The qualified relativist position argues that language influences how we perceive.
- Communication styles can be high context or low context, more direct or indirect, or more elaborate or understated.

- Co-cultural groups may use one of three orientations to dealing with dominant groups—assimilation, accommodation, or separation. Within each of these approaches are nonassertive, assertive, and aggressive strategies. Each of these strategies comes with benefits and costs to the co-cultural individual.
- We use language from our social positions, and the power of our language use and labels comes from that social position.
- People can be bilingual or multilingual, and they may engage in code switching or changing languages in different situations, depending on the contexts.
- Translation refers to expressing what was said in another language in a written text. Interpretation is the same process but is oral rather than written.
- Language policies are instituted with different goals. Sometimes language policies are meant to encourage assimilation into a language and national identity. Sometimes language policies are meant to provide protection to minority languages. Sometimes language policies regulate language use in different parts of a nation.
- Globalization has meant that English has become more important worldwide but also has created other intercultural communication conflicts.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important for intercultural communication scholars to study both language and discourse?
2. What is the relationship between our language and the way we perceive reality?
3. What are some cross-cultural variations in language use and communication style?
4. What aspects of context influence the choice of communication style?
5. What does a translator or an interpreter need to know to be effective?
6. Why is it important to know the social positions of individuals and groups involved in intercultural communication?
7. Why do some people say that we should not use labels to refer to people but should treat everybody as individuals? Do you agree?
8. Why do people have such strong reactions to language policies, as in the "English-only" movement?
9. In what ways is the increasing and widespread use of English around the world both a positive and a negative change for U.S. Americans?

Go to the self-quizzes on the Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/martinnakayama5 to further test your knowledge.

CHAPTER 7

NONVERBAL CODES AND CULTURAL SPACE

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Understand how verbal and nonverbal communication differ.
2. Discuss the types of messages that are communicated nonverbally.
3. Identify cultural universals in nonverbal communication.
4. Explain the limitations of some cross-cultural research findings.
5. Define and give an example of cross-cultural differences in facial expressions, proxemics, gestures, eye contact, paralanguage, chronemics, and silence.
6. Discuss the relationship between nonverbal communication and power.
7. Define cultural space.
8. Describe how cultural spaces are formed.
9. Explain why it is important to understand cultural spaces in intercultural communication.
10. Understand the differences between the modernist and postmodern views of cultural spaces.

Nonverbal elements of cultural communication are highly dynamic and play an important role in understanding intercultural communication. Consider misunderstandings based on differing expectations for spatial distance. For example, a new co-worker from Mexico who is accustomed to closer spatial distances stands closer to you than you are comfortable with and you back up to become comfortable, what does this action communicate to your co-worker? The consequences for this encounter may be a bit awkward, but in some other instances, understanding nonverbal communication can be a key to survival. A recent news story published by the *Institute for War and Peace Reporting* describes how nonverbal behaviors at military checkpoints in Baghdad play an important role in the safety and security of Iraqi civilians:

> *A Sunni driver coming up to a security post he believes is under Shia control should not only have the right ID to hand over, but should also push in a tape playing Shia religious songs and turn up the volume. He should hang a picture of Imam Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad and the most revered figure in the Shia faith, from the rear-view mirror. He might also slip on the large silver ring worn only by Shias, especially those considered to be descendants of the Prophet, and perhaps carry a "torba," the round piece of clay that Shias often place on their foreheads when they bow down in prayer. These and other handy tips are given on the Iraqi Rabita website, designed to advise Sunnis on how to get through Shia checkpoints. (Checkpoints: Baghdad's Russian Roulette, 2007)*

In another instance, military investigators asked U.S. soldiers if they had shot at women and children in cars at checkpoints, and one soldier answered, "Yes." Asked why, he replied, "They didn't respond to the signs [we gave], the presence of troops or warning shots. Basically, we were at a checkpoint, we had two Arabic signs that said to turn around or be shot. Once [they passed] . . . the first sign, they fired a warning shot. If they passed the second sign, they shot the vehicle. Sometimes it bothers me, "What if they couldn't read the signs?" (Smith & Tyson, 2005).

You may never need to know the right nonverbal behavior to pass through a military checkpoint (see Figure 7-1), but you certainly will find yourself in many intercultural communication situations and cultural spaces. Your own nonverbal communication may create additional problems and, if the behaviors are inappropriate for the particular cultural space, may exacerbate existing tensions. In other cases, your use of nonverbals might reduce tension and confusion.

The first part of this chapter focuses on the importance of understanding nonverbal aspects of intercultural communication. We can examine nonverbal communication in terms of the personal–contextual and the static–dynamic dialectics. Although nonverbal communication can be highly dynamic, personal space, gestures, and facial expressions are fairly static patterns of specific nonverbal communication codes. These patterns are the focus of the second part of this chapter. Finally, we investigate the concept of cultural space and the ways in which cultural identity is shaped and negotiated by the cultural spaces (home, neighborhood, and so on) that people occupy.

There are no guidebooks for reading everyday nonverbal behaviors, and nonverbal communication norms vary from culture to culture; therefore, we

FIGURE 7-1 Nonverbal behaviors at military checkpoints in Iraq play an important role in the safety and security of Iraqi civilians. (© *Wathiq Khuzaie/Getty Images*)

believe it is useless to list nonverbals to memorize. Instead, it will be more beneficial for you to learn the framework of nonverbal communication and cultural spaces so you can tap into the nonverbal systems of whatever cultural groups become relevant to your life. Understanding communication is a matter of understanding how to think dialectically about *systems* of meaning, and not discrete elements. Nonverbal intercultural communication is no exception.

THINKING DIALECTICALLY ABOUT NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION: DEFINING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

In this chapter, we discuss two forms of communication beyond speech. The first includes facial expression, personal space, gestures, eye contact, paralanguage, use of time, and conversational silence. (What is not said is often as important as what is spoken.) The second includes the cultural spaces that we occupy and negotiate. **Cultural spaces** are the social and cultural contexts in which our identity forms—where we grow up and where we live (not necessarily the physical homes and neighborhoods, but the cultural meanings created in these places).

cultural space The particular configuration of the communication that constructs meanings of various places.

In thinking dialectically, we need to consider the relationship between the nonverbal behavior and the cultural spaces in which the behavior occurs, and

between the nonverbal behavior and the verbal message. Although there are patterns to nonverbal behaviors, they are not always culturally appropriate in all cultural spaces. Remember, too, that some nonverbal behaviors are cultural, whereas others are idiosyncratic, that is, peculiar to individuals.

Comparing Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

Recognizing Nonverbal Behavior Both verbal and nonverbal communication are symbolic, communicate meaning, and are patterned—that is, they are governed by contextually determined rules. Societies have different nonverbal languages, just as they have different spoken languages. However, some differences between nonverbal and verbal communication codes have important implications for intercultural interaction.

Let's look at some examples of these differences. The following incident occurred to Judith when she was new to Algeria, where she lived for a while. One day she stood at her balcony and waved to one of the young Algerian teachers, who was walking across the school yard. Several minutes later, the young teacher knocked on the door, looking expectantly at Judith, as if summoned. Because Judith knew that it was uncommon in Algeria for men to visit women they didn't know well, she was confused. Why had he come to her door? Was it because she was foreign? After a few awkward moments, he left. A few weeks later, Judith figured it out. In Algeria (as in many other places), the U.S. "wave" is the nonverbal signal for "come here." The young teacher had assumed that Judith had summoned him to her apartment. As this example illustrates, rules for nonverbal communication vary among cultures and contexts.

Let's consider another example. Two U.S. students attending school in France were hitchhiking to the university in Grenoble for the first day of classes. A French motorist picked them up and immediately started speaking English to them. They wondered how he knew they spoke English. Later, when they took a train to Germany, the conductor walked into their compartment and berated them in English for putting their feet on the opposite seat. Again, they wondered how he had known that they spoke English. As these examples suggest, nonverbal communication entails more than gestures—even our appearance can communicate loudly. The students' appearance alone probably was a sufficient clue to their national identity. One of our students explains,

> *When I studied abroad in Europe, London more specifically, our clothing as a nonverbal expression was a dead giveaway that we were from America. We dressed much more casual, wore more colors, and had words written on our T-shirts and sweatshirts. This alone said enough; we didn't even have to speak to reveal that we were Americans.*

As these examples also show, nonverbal behavior operates at a subconscious level. We rarely think about how we stand, what gestures we use, and so on.

STUDENT VOICES

I have a couple of good friends who are deaf, and it is evident that body language, eye contact, and visual communication are far more important in our conversations than between two hearing people. I found that both of my friends, who lived very close to me, would much rather stop by my house than call me on the relay. I can see the cultural implications of space and distance. We keep in touch mostly by using e-mail. It's funny because the e-mails that I get from those guys have more commonly used slang words than most of my hearing friends use. The question is: Do my friends understand the slang, make it a part of their language, and create a sign for it, or do they know the words through somewhat of a verbal exchange with the hearing?

—Andrea

Occasionally, someone points out such behaviors, which brings them to the conscious level. Consider one more example, from our student Suzanne:

> *I was in Macedonia and I was traveling in a car, so I immediately put on my seat belt. My host family was very offended by this because buckling my seat belt meant I didn't trust the driver. After that I rode without a seat belt.*

When misunderstandings arise, we are more likely to question our verbal communication than our nonverbal communication. We can search for different ways to explain verbally what we mean. We can also look up words in a dictionary or ask someone to explain unfamiliar words. In contrast, it is more difficult to identify nonverbal miscommunications or misperceptions.

Learning Nonverbal Behavior Whereas we learn rules and meanings for language behavior in grammar and language arts lessons, we learn nonverbal meanings and behaviors by more implicit socialization. No one explains, "When you talk with someone you like, lean forward, smile, and touch the person frequently, because that will communicate that you really care about him or her." In many contexts in the United States, such behaviors communicate immediacy and positive meanings (Jones, 2004; Rocca, 2004). But how is it interpreted if someone does not display these behaviors?

Sometimes, though, we learn strategies for nonverbal communication. Have you ever been told to shake hands firmly when you meet someone? You may have learned that a limp handshake indicates a weak person. Likewise, many young women learn to cross their legs at the ankles and to keep their legs together when they sit. These strategies combine socialization and the teaching of nonverbal codes.

Coordinating Nonverbal and Verbal Behaviors Nonverbal behaviors can reinforce, substitute for, or contradict verbal behaviors. For example, when we shake our heads and say "no," we are reinforcing verbal behavior. When we point instead of saying "over there," we are substituting nonverbal behavior for

verbal communication. If we tell a friend, "I can't wait to see you," and then don't show up at the friend's house, our nonverbal behavior is contradicting the verbal message. Because nonverbal communication operates at a less conscious level, we tend to think that people have less control over their nonverbal behavior. Therefore, we often think of nonverbal behaviors as conveying the "real" messages.

What Nonverbal Behavior Communicates

relational messages Messages (verbal and nonverbal) that communicate how we feel about others.

Although language is an effective and efficient means of communicating explicit information or content, every communication also conveys **relational messages**—information on how the talker wants to be understood and viewed by the listener. These messages are communicated not by words, but through nonverbal behavior, including facial expressions, eye gaze, posture, and even our tone of voice (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). Nonverbal behavior also communicates **status** and power. For example, a supervisor may be able to touch subordinates, but it is usually unacceptable for subordinates to touch a supervisor. Broad, expansive gestures are associated with high status; conversely, holding the body in a tight, closed position communicates low status.

status The relative position an individual holds in social or organizational settings.

deception The act of making someone believe what is not true.

In addition, nonverbal behavior communicates **deception.** Early researchers believed that some nonverbal behaviors (e.g., avoiding eye contact or touching or rubbing the face) indicated lying. However, as more recent research has shown, deception is communicated by fairly idiosyncratic behaviors and seems to be revealed more by inconsistency in nonverbal communication than by specific nonverbal behaviors (Henningsen, Cruz, & Morr, 2000; Lock, 2004; Vrij, 2004).

Most nonverbal communication about affect, status, and deception happens at an unconscious level. For this reason, it plays an important role in intercultural interactions. Both pervasive and unconscious, it communicates how we feel about each other and about our cultural groups.

expectancy violation theory The view that when someone's nonverbal behavior violates our expectations, these violations will be perceived positively or negatively depending on the specific context and behavior.

A useful theory in understanding nonverbal communication across cultures is **expectancy violation theory.** This theory suggests that we have expectations (mostly subconscious) about how others should behave nonverbally in particular situations. When these expectations are violated (e.g., when someone stands too close to us), we will respond in specific ways. If an act is unexpected and interpreted negatively, for example, when someone stands too close to us at a religious service, we tend to regard the person and the relationship rather negatively. However, if the act is unexpected and interpreted positively (e.g., an attractive person stands close at a party), we will probably regard the relationship rather favorably; in fact, more favorably than if someone stands the exact "expected" distance from us at a religious service or party. Because nonverbal communication occurs at a subconscious level, our negative or positive feelings toward someone may be due to the fact that they violated our expectations—without our realizing it (Burgoon, 1995; Floyd, Ramirez, & Burgoon, 2008).

THE UNIVERSALITY OF NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR

Most traditional research in intercultural communication focuses on identifying cross-cultural differences in nonverbal behavior. How do culture, ethnicity, and gender influence nonverbal communication patterns? How universal is most nonverbal communication? Research traditionally has sought to answer these questions.

As we have observed in previous chapters, it is neither beneficial nor accurate to try to reduce individuals to one element of their identity (gender, ethnicity, nationality, and so on). Attempts to place people in discrete categories tend to reduce their complexities and to lead to major misunderstandings. However, we often classify people according to various categories to help us find universalities. For example, although we may know that not all Germans are alike, we may seek information about Germans in general to help us communicate better with individual Germans. In this section, we explore the extent to which nonverbal communication codes are universally shared. We also look for possible cultural variations in these codes that may serve as tentative guidelines to help us communicate better with others. (See Figure 7-2.)

Recent Research Findings

Research investigating the universality of nonverbal communication has focused on four areas: (1) the relationship of human behavior to that of primates (particularly chimpanzees), (2) nonverbal communication of sensory-deprived children who are blind or deaf, (3) facial expressions, and (4) universal functions of nonverbal social behavior.

Chimpanzees and humans share many nonverbal behaviors. For example, both exhibit the eyebrow flash—a slight raising of the eyebrow that communicates recognition—one of the most primitive and universal animal behaviors. Primates and humans also share some facial expressions, and very recent research reveals another gesture shared by chimps and humans—the upturned palm, meaning "gimme." Chimps have been observed using it in the wild and in captivity, to ask other chimps to share food, for help in a fight, or to request a grooming session (Pollick, Jeneson, & de Waal, 2008). There do seem to be compelling parallels between specific facial expressions and gestures displayed by human and nonhuman primates, universally interpreted to hold similar meanings. However, it still remains true that communication among nonhuman primates, like chimps and monkeys, appears to be less complex than among humans (Preuschoft, 2000; Tierney, 2007)

Recent studies compared the facial expressions of children who were blind with those of sighted children and found many similarities. Even though the children who were blind couldn't see the facial expressions of others to mimic them, they still made the same expressions. This suggests some innate, genetic basis for these behaviors (Galati, Sini, Schmidt, & Tinti, 2003).

FIGURE 7-2 Nonverbal behavior can vary among cultures, in different settings, and with gender. In this photo, two men are conversing in Israel. Note the nonverbal behavior of these men—their postures, eye contact, physical contact, and facial expressions. These behaviors convey an informal social relationship among friends. How might these same nonverbal behaviors be interpreted in different settings? With strangers? (© *Frank Siteman/Stock.Boston*)

facial expressions
Facial gestures that convey emotions and attitudes.

Indeed, many cross-cultural studies support the notion of some universality in nonverbal communication, particularly in **facial expressions.** Several facial gestures seem to be universal, including the eyebrow flash just described, the nose wrinkle (indicating slight social distancing), and the "disgust face" (a strong sign of social repulsion). It is also possible that grooming behavior is universal (as it is in animals), although it seems to be somewhat suppressed in Western societies (Schiefenhovel, 1997). Recent findings indicate that at least six basic emotions—including happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, anger, and surprise—are communicated by similar facial expressions in most societies. Expressions for these emotions are recognized by most cultural groups as having the same meaning (Ekman, 2003; Matsumoto, Franklin, Choi, Rogers, & Tatani, 2002).

Recent research on the universality of nonverbal behavior has also focused on how some nonverbal behavior fills universal human social needs for promoting social affiliation or bonding. For example, according to this research, laughter is not just a message about the positive feeling of the sender but an attempt to influence others, to make them feel more positive toward the sender. Similarly, the social purpose of mimicry—when interaction partners adopt similar postures, gestures, and mannerisms—is to create an affective or social bond with others. Researchers point out that people in all cultures use these nonverbal

behaviors to influence others, and over time, these behaviors that contributed to positive relationships were favored and eventually became automatic and nonconscious (Montepare, 2003; Patterson, 2003).

Although research may indicate universalities in nonverbal communication, some variations exist. The evoking stimuli (i.e., what causes the nonverbal behavior) may vary from one culture to another. Smiling, for example, is universal, but what prompts a person to smile may be culture-specific. Similarly, there are variations in the rules for nonverbal behavior and the contexts in which nonverbal communication takes place. For example, people kiss in most cultures, but there is variation in who kisses whom and in what contexts. When French friends greet each other, they often kiss on both cheeks but never on the mouth. Friends in the United States usually kiss on greeting only after long absence, with the kiss usually accompanied by a hug. The rules for kissing also vary along gender lines.

Finally, it is important to look for larger cultural patterns in the nonverbal behavior, rather than trying simply to identify all of the cultural differences. Researcher David Matsumoto (1990) suggests that although cultural differences in nonverbal patterns are interesting, noting these differences is not sufficient. Studying and cataloging every variation in every aspect of nonverbal behavior would be an overwhelming task. Instead, he recommends studying nonverbal communication patterns that vary with other cultural patterns, such as values.

For example, Matsumoto links cultural patterns in facial expressions with cultural values of power distance and individualism versus collectivism. Hypothetically, cultural groups that emphasize status differences will tend to express emotions that preserve these status differences. Matsumoto also suggests that within individualistic cultures the degree of difference in emotional display between ingroups and outgroups is greater than the degree of difference between the same groups in collectivistic societies. If these theoretical relationships hold true, we can generalize about the nonverbal behavior of many different cultural groups.

Nonverbal Codes

Facial Expressions As noted earlier, there have been many investigations of the universality of facial expressions. Psychologists Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen (1987) conducted extensive and systematic research in nonverbal communication. They showed pictures of U.S. Americans' facial expressions reflecting six emotions thought to be universal to people in various cultural groups. They found that people in these various cultures consistently identified the same emotions reflected in the facial expressions in the photographs.

However, Ekman and Friesen's studies have been criticized for a few reasons. First, the studies don't tap into universality; that is, people may be able to recognize and identify the six emotions because of exposure to media. Also, the researchers presented a limited number of responses (multiple-choice answers) when they asked respondents to identify emotions expressed.

Later studies improved on this research. Researchers took many photographs, not always posed, of facial expressions of members from many different cultural groups; then they asked the subjects to identify the emotion conveyed

by the facial expression. They showed these photographs to many different individuals in many different countries, including some without exposure to media. Their conclusion supports the notion of universality of facial expressions. Specifically, basic human emotions are expressed in a fairly finite number of facial expressions, and these expressions can be recognized and identified universally (Boucher & Carlson, 1980; Ekman, 2003).

Proxemics Unlike facial expressions, the norms for personal space seem to vary considerably from culture to culture. As you may recall from Chapter 2, proxemics is the study of how people use various types of space in their everyday lives: fixed feature space, semifixed space, and informal space. Fixed feature space is characterized by set boundaries (divisions within an office building); semifixed feature space is defined by fixed boundaries such as furniture. Informal space, or personal space, is characterized by a personal zone or "bubble" that varies for individuals and circumstances. The use of each of these spatial relationships can facilitate or impede effective communication across cultures; the area that humans control and use most often is their informal space.

O. M. Watson (1970), a proxemics specialist, investigated nonverbal communication between Arab and U.S. students after hearing many complaints from each group about the other. The Arab students viewed the U.S. students as distant and rude; the U.S. students saw the Arab students as pushy, arrogant, and rude. As Watson showed, the two groups were operating with different rules concerning personal space. Watson's research supports Edward Hall's (1966) observations about the cultural variations in how much distance individuals place between themselves and others. Hall distinguished contact cultures from noncontact cultures. He described **contact cultures** as those societies in which people stand closer together while talking, engage in more direct eye contact, use face-to-face body orientations more often while talking, touch more frequently, and speak in louder voices. He suggested that societies in South America and southern Europe are contact cultures, whereas those in northern Europe, the United States, and the Far East are **noncontact cultures**—in which people tend to stand farther apart when conversing, maintain less eye contact, and touch less often. Subsequent research seems to confirm Hall's and Watson's early studies (Andersen, Hecht, Hoobler, & Smallwood, 2002).

contact cultures
Cultural groups in which people tend to stand close together and touch frequently when they interact—for example, cultural groups in South America, the Middle East, and southern Europe. (See **noncontact cultures.**)

noncontact cultures
Cultural groups in which people tend to maintain more space and touch less often than people do in contact cultures. For instance, Great Britain and Japan tend to have noncontact cultures. (See **contact cultures.**)

Of course, many other factors besides regional culture determine how far we stand from someone. Gender, age, ethnicity, context, and topic all influence the use of personal space. In fact, some studies have shown that regional culture is perhaps the least important factor. For example, in many Arab and Muslim societies, gender may be the overriding factor, because unmarried men and women rarely stand close together, touch each other, or maintain direct eye contact. In contrast, male friends may stand very close together, kiss on the cheek, and even hold hands—reflecting loyalty, great friendship, and, most important, equality in status, with no sexual connotation (Fattah, 2005; Khuri, 2001).

Gestures Gestures, perhaps even more so than personal space, vary greatly from culture to culture. (See Figure 7-3.) The consequences for this variation

POTENTIALLY EMBARRASSING GESTURAL MIXUPS

U.S. Gesture	Other Interpretations
Waving good-bye	Come here (Japan)
Good luck sign	Boyfriend (Japan)
Screw you sign	I don't believe you (Uruguay)
OK sign	Money (Japan) Sex (Mexico) Homosexual (Ethiopia)
Slash across the throat	Lost job (Japan)

Source: From D. Archer, (1997), "Unspoken Diversity: Cultural Differences in Gestures, *Qualitative Sociology*, *20:* 81.

can be quite dramatic, as President G. W. Bush discovered when he gave the "hook 'em horns" greeting to the University of Texas Longhorn marching band during his inauguration. The photos of this greeting were met with confusion in Norway, where the gesture is considered a salute to Satan ("Norwegians Confused by Bush 'Horns' Salute," 2005).

Researcher Dane Archer (1997) describes his attempt to catalogue the various gestures around the world on video. He began this video project with several hypotheses: first, that there would be great variation, and this he found to be true. However, more surprising, his assumption regarding the existence of some universal gestures or at least some universal *categories* of gestures (e.g., every culture must have an obscene gesture) was not confirmed.

He gathered his information by visiting English as a Second Language classes and asking international students to demonstrate gestures from their home cultures, resulting in the documentary *A World of Gestures: Culture and Nonverbal Communication*. He drew several conclusions from his study: first, that gestures and their meaning can be very subtle (see the box "Potentially Embarrassing Gestural Mix-ups"). His work "often elicited gasps of surprise, as ESL students from one culture discovered that what at first appeared to be a familiar gesture actually means something radically different in another society" (p. 87). For example, in Germany, and many other European cultures, the gesture for "stupid" is a finger on the forehead, the American gesture for "smart" is nearly identical, but the finger is held an inch to the side, at the temple. Similarly, the American raised thumb gesture of "way to go" is a vulgar gesture, meaning "sit on this" in Sardinia and "screw you" in Iran. And of course, we've already mentioned the difference between the the "hook 'em horns" gesture and the salute to Satan.

Second, Archer emphasizes that gestures are different from many other nonverbal expressions in that they are accessible to conscious awareness—they can be explained, illustrated, and taught to outsiders. Finally, as noted earlier, he had assumed there would be some universal categories—a gesture for "very good,"

FIGURE 7-3 Cultural groups vary in their norms for nonverbal greetings, e.g. a handshake, a bow. (© *STOCK4B-RF/Getty Images*)

a gesture for "crazy," an obscene gesture. Not so. A number of societies (e.g., the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland) have no such gesture. In the end, he concludes that through making the video, "We all acquired a deeply enhanced sense of the power, nuances, and unpredictability of cultural differences" (p. 87). And the practical implication of the project was to urge travelers to practice "gestural humility"—assuming that the familiar gestures of our home culture will not mean the same things abroad and also "that we cannot infer or intuit the meaning of any gestures we observe in other cultures" (p. 80).

eye contact A nonverbal code, eye gaze, that communicates meanings about respect and status and often regulates turn-taking during interactions.

Eye Contact **Eye contact** often is included in proxemics because it regulates interpersonal distance. Direct eye contact shortens the distance between two people, whereas less eye contact increases the distance. Eye contact communicates meanings about respect and status and often regulates turn-taking.

Patterns of eye contact vary from culture to culture. In many societies, avoiding eye contact communicates respect and deference, although this may vary from context to context. For many U.S. Americans, maintaining eye contact communicates that one is paying attention and showing respect.

When they speak with others, most U.S. Americans look away from their listeners most of the time, looking at their listeners perhaps every 10 to 15 seconds. When a speaker is finished taking a turn, he or she looks directly at the listener to signal completion. However, some cultural groups within the United States use even less eye contact while they speak. For example, some Native Americans tend to avert eye gaze during conversation.

POINT *of* VIEW

Life-or-death decisions sometimes depend on subtle nonverbal signals like tone of voice. According to cross-cultural psychologist Harry Triandis (1994), the first Gulf War could have been avoided if not for a misinterpretation of paralinguistic cues.

> *In January, 1991, James Baker, then the United States Secretary of State, met with Tariq Aziz, the foreign minister of Iraq. They met in an effort to reach an agreement that would prevent a war. Also present in the room was the half-brother of Saddam Hussein, whose role included frequent calls to Hussein with updates on the talks. Baker stated, in his standard calm manner, that the U.S. would attack if Iraq did not move out of Kuwait. Hussein's half-brother heard these words and reported that "the Americans will not attack. They are weak. They are calm. They are not angry. They are only talking." Six days later Iraq saw Desert Storm and the loss of about 175,000 of their citizens. Triandis argued that Iraqis attend to how something is said more than what is said. He further suggests that if Baker had pounded the table, yelled, and shown outward signs of anger, the outcome may have been entirely different.*

Source: H. C. Triandis, *Culture and Social Behavior.* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994). Cited in J. J. Blascovich and C. R. Hartel (Eds.), *Human Behavior in Military Contexts.* (National Research Council: The National Academies Press (Committee on opportunities in Research in Behavioral and Social Sciences for the U.S. Military), 2008).

Paralinguistics **Paralinguistics** refers to the study of paralanguage—vocal behaviors that indicate *how* something is said, include speaking rate, volume, pitch, and stress, among others. Saying something very quickly in a loud tone of voice will be interpreted differently from the same words said in a quieter tone of voice at a slower rate, as shown in the Point of View box describing the encounter between U.S. and Iraqi officials prior to the first Gulf War. There are two types of vocal behavior—voice qualities and vocalizations (Alberts, Nakayama, & Martin, 2007).

paralinguistics The study of vocal behaviors include voice qualities and vocalization.

Voice qualities—or the nontechnical term, tone of voice—means the same thing as vocal qualities. Voice qualities include speed, pitch, rhythm, vocal range, and articulation; these qualities make up the "music" of the human voice. We all know people whose voice qualities are widely recognized. For example, the voice of actor Fran Drescher, who starred in the TV sitcom *The Nanny*, has been frequently remarked upon. Her trademark whiny chuckle and nasal voice allow her to be recognized no matter where she is. Speakers also vary in how they articulate sounds, that is, how distinctly they pronounce individual words and sounds. We tend not to notice these paralinguistic features unless someone articulates very precisely or very imprecisely. Paralinguistics often lead people to negatively evaluate speakers in intercultural communication contexts even when they don't understand the language. For example, Chinese speakers often sound rather musical and nasal to English speakers; English speakers sound rather harsh and guttural to French speakers.

voice qualities The "music" of the human voice, including speed, pitch, rhythm, vocal range, and articulation.

vocalizations The sounds we utter that do not have the structure of language.

Vocalizations are the sounds we utter that do not have the structure of language. Tarzan's yell is one famous example. Vocalizations include vocal cues such as laughing, crying, whining, and moaning as well as the intensity or volume of one's speech. They also include sounds that aren't actual words but that serve as fillers, such as "uh-huh," "uh," "ah," and "er." The paralinguistic aspects of speech serve a variety of communicative functions. They reveal mood and emotion; they also allow us to emphasize or stress a word or idea, create a distinctive identity, and (along with gestures) regulate conversation. Paralanguage can be a confusing factor in intercultural communication. For example, Europeans interpret the loudness of Americans as aggressive behavior, while Americans might think the British are secretive because they talk quietly. The amount of silence in conversations and also the speaking rate differ among cultures. For instance, the Finnish and Japanese are comfortable having pauses in their conversations, while most U.S. Americans are seen to talk rapidly and are pretty uncomfortable with silences.

chronemics The concept of time and the rules that govern its use.

monochronic An orientation to time that assumes it is linear and is a commodity that can be lost or gained.

Chronemics **Chronemics** concerns concepts of time and the rules that govern its use. There are many cultural variations regarding how people understand and use time. Edward Hall (1966) distinguished between monochronic and polychronic time orientation. People who have a **monochronic** concept of time regard it as a commodity: time can be gained, lost, spent, wasted, or saved. In this orientation, time is linear, with one event happening at a time. In general, monochronic cultures value being punctual, completing tasks, and keeping to schedules. Most university staff and faculty in the United States maintain a monochronic orientation to time. Classes, meetings, and office appointments start when scheduled; faculty members see one student at a time, hold one meeting at a time, and keep appointments except in the case of emergency. Family problems are considered poor reasons for not fulfilling academic obligations—for both faculty and students.

polychronic An orientation to time that sees it as circular and more holistic.

In contrast, in a **polychronic** orientation, time is more holistic, and perhaps more circular: Several events can happen at once. Many international business negotiations and technical assistance projects falter and even fail because of differences in time orientation. For example, U.S. businesspeople often complain that meetings in the Middle East do not start "on time," that people socialize during meetings, and that meetings may be canceled because of personal obligations. Tasks often are accomplished *because* of personal relationships, not in spite of them. International students and business personnel observe that U.S. Americans seem too tied to their schedules; they suggest that U.S. Americans do not care enough about relationships and often sacrifice time with friends and family to complete tasks and keep appointments.

Silence Cultural groups may vary in the degree of emphasis placed on silence, which can be as meaningful as language (Acheson, 2007). One of our students recalls his childhood:

> *I always learned while growing up that silence was the worst punishment ever. For example, if the house chore stated clearly that I needed to take the garbage out,*

STUDENT VOICES

Giving gifts seems to be a universal way to please someone, if the gift is appropriate. One colleague of mine, Nishehs, once tried to impress our boss, Joe. Nishehs brought a well-wrapped gift to Joe when they first met with each other in person. Joe was indeed pleased as he received the gift from Nishehs, but his smile faded away quickly right after he opened the gift. Joe questioned Nishehs angrily, "Why is it green?" Shocked and speechless, Nishehs murmured, "What's wrong with a green hat?"

The miscommunication resulted from the cultural differences between them. Nishehs is an Indian, whereas Joe is Chinese. For the Chinese, a green hat means one's wife is having an extramarital affair.

—Chris

and I had not done so, then my mother would not say a word to me. And I would know right away that I had forgotten to do something.

In most U.S. American contexts, silence is not highly valued. Particularly in developing relationships, silence communicates awkwardness and can make people feel uncomfortable. According to scholar William B. Gudykunst's (1985, 2005) uncertainty reduction theory, the main reason for communicating verbally in initial interactions is to reduce uncertainty. In U.S. American contexts, people employ active uncertainty reduction strategies, such as asking questions. However, in many other cultural contexts, people reduce uncertainty using more passive strategies—for example, remaining silent, observing, or perhaps asking a third party about someone's behavior.

In a classic study on the rules for silence among the western Apache in Arizona, researcher Keith Basso (1970) identified five contexts in which silence is appropriate: (1) meeting strangers, (2) courting someone, (3) seeing friends after a long absence, (4) getting cussed out, and (5) being with people who are grieving. Verbal reticence with strangers is directly related to the conviction that the establishment of social relationships is a serious matter that calls for caution, careful judgment, and plenty of time.

Basso hypothesized that the underlying commonality in these social situations is that participants perceive their relationships vis-à-vis one another to be ambiguous and/or unpredictable and that silence is an appropriate response to uncertainty and unpredictability. He also suggested that this same contextual rule may apply to other cultural groups.

Communication scholar Charles Braithwaite (1990) tried to find out if Basso's rule applied to other communities. He compiled ethnographic accounts from 13 speech communities in which silence seems to play a similar role; these groups included Warm Springs (Oregon) Indians, Japanese Hawaiians, and 17th-century Quakers. Braithwaite extended Basso's rule when he determined that in many communities silence is not simply associated with uncertainty. Silence also is associated with social situations in which a known and unequal distribution of power exists among participants.

Recently, scholar Covarrubias (2007) points out that some of the early investigations of silence in American Indian communities did not fully value the communicative importance of silence in these and other cultures. She now encourages communication scholars to rethink the way they view silence, to see it not "as an absence, but, rather, as a fullness of opportunity for being and learning" (p. 270) and perhaps ask what can American Indian perspectives contribute to our knowledge of communication, "particularly to the much underengaged and much needed inquiry into the worlds humans create within silence?" (p. 271)

Recent research has found similar patterns in other cultures. For example, researchers have described the *Asaillinen* (matter-of-fact) verbal style among Finnish people that involves a distrust of talkativeness as "slickness" and a sign of unreliability (Carbaugh & Berry, 2001; Sajavaara & Lehtonen, 1997). Silence, for Finns, reflects thoughtfulness, appropriate consideration, and intelligence, particularly in public discourse or in educational settings like a classroom. In an ethnographic study investigating this communication pattern, Wilkins (2005) reports two excerpts from interviews that illustrate this pattern—one interview with a Finnish student and one with an American student:

Excerpt 1

Finnish Student: I have been to America.

Wilkins: Can you tell me what the experience was like?

Student: The people and the country were very nice.

Wilkins: Did you learn anything?

Student: No.

Wilkins: Why not?

Student: Americans just talk all the time.

Excerpt 2

Wilkins: Do you like Finland?

American Student: Oh yes, I like it a lot.

Wilkins: How about the people?

Student: Sure, Finns are very nice.

Wilkins: How long have you been at the university?

Student: About nine months already.

Wilkins: Oh, have you learned anything?

Student: No, not really.

Wilkins: Why not?

Student: Finns do not say anything in class.

In addition to a positive view of silence, nonverbal facial expressions in the *Asaillinen* style tend to be rather fixed—and expressionless. The American student, of course, did not have the cultural knowledge to understand what can be accomplished by thoughtful activity and silence.

Other scholars have reported similar distrust of talk in Japanese and Chinese cultures influenced by Confucianism and Taoism. Confucius rejected eloquent speaking and instead advocated hesitancy and humble talk in his philosophy of the ideal person (Chang, 1997; Kim, 2001). As one of our Taiwanese students told us, "In America, sometimes students talk about half the class time. Compared to my classes in Taiwan, if a student asked too many questions or expressed his/her opinions that much, we would say that he or she is a show-off."

In a recent review of scholarly research on silence, communication scholar Kris Acheson (2007) acknowledges that silence in the United States has often been associated with negative, unhealthy relationships, or with disempowerment, for example, when women and/or minorities feel their voices are not heard. However, she tells us that increasingly U.S. Americans recognize the positive and sometimes powerful uses of silences in certain contexts. For example, nurses and doctors are encouraged to honor silent patients and learn to employ silence in their ethical care; young people are advised to seek out silence in their lives for the sake of health and sanity, to even noiseproof their homes in an attempt to boost health. In business contexts, sometimes keeping quiet is the best strategy and talking too much can kill a business deal. In education, teachers can create a space for understanding rather than counterarguments by asking for silent reflection after comments or performances. Finally, she admits that in some contexts, like politics and law, silence is still seen as completely negative; for example, pleading the Fifth equates silence with guilt, silence by politicians is often viewed as too much secrecy.

Stereotype, Prejudice, and Discrimination

As noted previously, one of the problems with identifying cultural variations in nonverbal codes is that it is tempting to overgeneralize these variations and stereotype people. For example, psychologist Helmut Morsbach (1988) cautions us about comparing Japanese and Western attitudes toward silence. Based on his research and extensive experience in Japan, he identifies some of the subtleties of cultural patterns of silence. For instance, the television is on continuously in many Japanese homes, and tape-recorded comments about beauty are transmitted at Zen gardens. So, although many scholars suggest that silence might be a cultural ideal, things may be different in practice. In very specific situations (such as in mother–daughter relationships or in the hiding of true feelings), there may be more emphasis on silence in Japan than in comparable U.S. situations. Also, when communicating with strangers, the Japanese view silence as more negative than it is in the United States (Hasegawa & Gudykunst, 1998).

In any case, we would be wise to heed Morsbach's warning about generalizations. Cultural variations are tentative guidelines that we can use in intercultural interaction. They should serve as examples, to help us understand that there is a great deal of variation in nonverbal behavior. Even if we can't anticipate how other people's behavior may differ from our own, we can be flexible when we do encounter differences in how close someone stands or how she or he uses eye contact or conceptualizes time.

SOCIAL VERSUS PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFINITIONS OF RACISM: THE LESSONS OF KATRINA

Of the many sorry things about the contemporary United States that Hurricane Katrina made plain, perhaps none was more depressing than what it showed about the profound divide in how Americans think about race and racism.

This essay suggests that the debate over the racial meaning of Katrina exposes a public disagreement about the meaning of racism itself. The fundamental divide in the debate over racism in the United States today is between those who regard racism as essentially a question of individual psychology *as opposed to those who consider it a* social, structural *phenomenon.*

One of the things that makes discussing racism fundamentally challenging is the tendency . . . to equate racism with racial prejudice. . . . In this definition, racism is not a social condition but rather is something that exists in the minds of "racists."

It is widely and correctly observed that this sort of racial prejudice, or bigotry, has abated greatly in the last half century. Though racial prejudice certainly still exists, many fewer people despise others simply because of their skin color. . . .

The problem with equating racism with prejudice is that such a definition of racism fails to address the fact that racial discrimination takes place not merely through intentional (though perhaps unselfconscious) interactions between individuals, but also as a result of deep social and institutional practices and habits. . . .

The continued exclusion of blacks from certain prestigious, purely social organizations is the archetype for this sort of racism. Consider the stereotype of the all-white country club. The barrier to entry for blacks into these sorts of institutions is rarely an active rule *banning blacks from joining. Rather, what excludes blacks is that the club members know few if any black people as social equals* outside *the club. Now, it would be a mistake to conclude from this lack of black friends that the club members are necessarily prejudiced against black people. Rather, the club is simply an institutional manifestation of a longstanding social network of upper-class whites. For such a social set, it's not that they're* against *socializing with blacks (though maybe their parents or grandparents were), it's just that* as a matter of fact they don't *socialize with blacks. In the meanwhile, the club facilitates the making of money (within its narrow social circle), the reproduction of the elite (within the same narrow social circle), and thus generally works to assure the social replication of the longstanding racialist pattern,* all without a discriminatory thought ever entering anyone's head.

Moreover, it should be stressed that racism can replicate itself via a mere unwillingness to challenge such racialized institutions and patterns. . . . In

the case of Katrina, the result was a huge gap between blacks and whites in their understanding of the meaning of the catastrophe: for blacks, the visible disproportion of blacks among Katrina's victims signified how the government and the American people systematically ignore the plight of their communities; by contrast, the large majority of whites considered race to be more or less irrelevant to the meaning of Katrina.

Here we arrive at the fulcrum of the contemporary political debate about racism. It cannot be repeated often enough that racial exclusion, e.g. racism, today happens not so much through active bigotry as it does through the tacit exclusions created by these sorts of unstated, unconsidered social habits. The fundamental point is one that is deeply uncomfortable for large sectors of this country: if your social network is, for purely historical reasons, defined by color lines that were drawn long ago in a different and undeniably widely bigoted age, then you don't have to be a bigot yourself to be perpetuating the institutional structures of racial exclusion, e.g. racism. *This was exactly Illinois Senator Barack Obama's point when he declared on the Senate floor that the poor response to Katrina was not "evidence of active malice," but merely the result of "a continuation of passive indifference."*[1] *. . .*

When two thirds of blacks believe that "racism continues to be a problem" in this country, while two thirds of whites believe that it is not, the divide in good measure can be explained by the competing understandings of what constitutes racism. . . . the reason disproportionately many black folks suffered at the hands of Katrina was not because white people (or George Bush) disliked *the black people in New Orleans; it was because they didn't regard blacks and blackness as a meaningful social categories worthy of special attention. It was precisely that history of neglect, that failure to care, that underpinned the racial aspect of the Katrina disaster. . . .*

In sum, Katrina provides an unprecedented opportunity to communicate that "racism" is not just a matter of the psychology of hatred but is instead also a matter of the racial structure of political and economic inclusion and exclusion. Moreover, we should not blinker ourselves: this message is one that is deeply opposed by powerful political forces in the United States today. Those who deny the social nature of racism may not be bigots, but they are undoubtedly abettors of racism in the social sense of the word.

1. "Statement of Senator Barack Obama on Hurricane Katrina Relief Efforts," http://obama.senate.gov/statement/050906-statement_of_senator_barack_obama_on_hurricane_katrina_relief_efforts/ (September 6, 2005).

Source: From N. Gilman, "What Katrina Teaches About the Meaning of Racism." Social Science Research Council, September 14, 2005. Available from http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/Gilman/.

Prejudice is often based on nonverbal aspects of behavior. That is, the negative prejudgment is triggered by physical appearances or behavior. The following report from a Web site that tracks hate crimes underscores the importance of physical appearances in prejudice:

> *On September 26, 2005, in Marysville, California, Daniel J. Farris, 18, was charged with assault with a deadly weapon, causing pain, suffering or injury to an elder or dependent adult and hate crime for allegedly beating an elderly black man while yelling racial slurs. (Accessed at http://www.splcenter.org/intel/hatewatch/fortherecord.jsp)*

As in many instances of hate crimes, the victim's appearance was more significant than his specific cultural heritage. From these kinds of experiences with prejudice, victims can often spot prejudicial behavior and people with surprising accuracy. In an interesting study, blacks were able to detect prejudiced people (identified previously by objective survey measurement) after only 20 seconds of observation, with much higher accuracy than whites (Richeson & Shelton, 2005). Victims may also then develop imaginary "maps" that tell them where they belong and where they are likely to be rejected. They may even start to avoid places and situations in which they do not feel welcome (Marsiglia & Hecht, 1998). Can you identify places you've been where you or others were not welcome?

discrimination Behaviors resulting from stereotypes or prejudice that cause some people to be denied equal participation or rights based on cultural-group membership, such as race.

Stereotyping or prejudice can lead to overt nonverbal actions to exclude, avoid, or distance and are called **discrimination.** Discrimination may be based on race (racism), gender (sexism), or any of the other identities discussed in Chapter 5. It may range from subtle, nonverbal behavior such as lack of eye contact or exclusion from a conversation, to verbal insults and exclusion from jobs or other economic opportunities, to physical violence and systematic exclusion. To see how exclusion and avoidance can be subtle, consider all the communication choices people can make that affect whether other people feel welcome or valued or like outsiders who don't belong (Johnson, 2001, p. 59):

- Whether we look at people when we talk with them
- Whether we smile at people when they walk into the room or stare as if to say "What are you doing?" or stop the conversation with a hush they have to wade through to be included in the smallest way
- Whether we listen and respond to what people say, or drift away to someone or something else; whether we talk about things they know about, or stick to what's peculiar to the "in-group"
- Whether we acknowledge people's presence, or make them wait as if they weren't there; whether we avoid touching their skin when giving or taking something; how closely we watch them to see what they're up to
- Whether we avoid someone walking down the street, giving them a wide berth when we pass or even cross to the other side
- Whether we share with new colleagues the informal rules that you have to know to succeed, belong, or get along—or turn the conversation to something light and superficial when they're around
- Whether we invite people to our home or out for a drink and talk

Discrimination may be interpersonal, collective, or institutional. In recent years, interpersonal racism has become not only more subtle and indirect but also more persistent. Equally persistent is institutionalized or collective discrimination whereby individuals are systematically denied equal participation in society or equal access to rights in informal and formal ways (Maluso, 1995).

A study by the U.S. Justice Department found that black, Latino/a, and white motorists are equally likely to pulled over by police, but blacks and Latinos are much more likely to be searched, handcuffed, arrested, and subjected to force or the threat of it. Handcuffs were used on a higher percentage of black (6.4%) and Latino/a motorists (5.6%) than white (2%). Also, blacks (2.7%) and Latinos (2.4%) were far more likely than whites (0.8%) to report that police used force or the threat of force (Sniffen, 2005).

Semiotics and Nonverbal Communication

The study of **semiotics,** or semiology, offers a useful approach to examining how different signs communicate meaning. While semiotics is often used for analyzing language/discourse, we find it more useful in analyzing nonverbals and cultural spaces. A particularly useful framework comes from literary critic Roland Barthes (1980). In his system, **semiosis** is the production of meaning and is constructed through the interpretation of **signs**—the combination of signifiers and signified. **Signifiers** are the culturally constructed arbitrary words or symbols we use to refer to something else, the **signified.** For example, the word *man* is a signifier that refers to the signified, an adult male human being.

semiotics The analysis of the nature of and relationship between signs.

semiosis The process of producing meaning.

signs In semiotics the meanings that emerge from the combination of the signifiers and signifieds.

signifiers In semiotics, the culturally constructed arbitrary words or symbols that people use to refer to something else.

signified In semiotics, anything that is expressed in arbitrary words or signifiers.

Obviously, *man* is a general signifier that does not refer to any particular man. The relationship between this signifier and the sign (the meaning) depends on how the signifier is used (for example, as in the sentence, "There is a man sitting in the first chair on the left.") or on our general sense of what *man* means. The difference between the signifier *man* and the sign rests on the difference between the word *man* and the meaning of that word. At its most basic level, *man* means an adult human male, but the semiotic process does not end there. *Man* carries many other layers of meaning. *Man* may or may not refer to any particular adult male, but it provides a concept that you can use to construct particular meanings based on the way the sign *man* functions. What does *man* mean when someone says, "Act like a real man!"

What do you have in mind when you think of the term *man*? How do you know when to use this signifier (and when not to use it) to communicate to others? Think of all of the adult males you know. How do they "fit" under this signifier? In what ways does the signifier reign over their behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal, to communicate particular ideas about them? We are not so much interested in the discrete, individual signifiers, but rather the ways that signifiers are combined and configured. The goal is to establish entire systems of semiosis and the ways that those systems create meaning. Semiotics allows us one way to "crack the codes" of another cultural framework.

The use of these semiotic systems relies on many codes taken from a variety of contexts and places: economic institutions, history, politics, religion, and so

STUDENT VOICES

A close friend I used to have in high school was very intelligent. He took honors classes and did great in school. He was Hispanic and dressed more or less like a "cholo," with baggy pants and long shirts. When he went to speak with his counselor upon entering university, the counselor came to the conclusion that my friend was going to take easy classes rather than honors classes. His mother, who had accompanied him to the advising meeting, couldn't believe what the counselor was saying! My friend's appearance obviously caused the counselor to come to a conclusion about who and what type of person my friend was.

—Adriana

on. For example, when Nazi swastikas were spray-painted on Jewish graves in Lyon, France, in 1992, the message they communicated relied on semiotic systems from the past. The history of the Nazi persecution of Jews during World War II is well known: The power behind the signifier, the swastika, comes from that historical knowledge and the codes of antisemitism that it invokes to communicate its message. Relations from the past influence the construction and maintenance of intercultural relations in the present. Semiotics is a useful tool for examining the various ways that meaning is created in advertisements, clothing, tattoos, and other cultural artifacts. Semioticians have been attentive to the context in which the signifiers (words and symbols) are placed to understand which meanings are being communicated. For example, wearing certain kinds of clothes in specific cultural contexts may communicate unwanted messages, as shown in the "Student Voice" box. Or not wearing a particular artifact can also communicate meaning, as illustrated by the controversy over Senator Barack Obama's choosing not to wear a flag lapel pin (see Point of View box "Obama's Lapels"). Color symbolism also varies from culture to culture and context to context. For example, in China, the color red symbolizes good luck and celebration; in India it denotes purity; however, in South Africa, red is the color of mourning. In Egypt, yellow is the color of mourning; and in Japan, yellow symbolizes courage (Kyrnin, 2008). In the U.S., black clothing can hold various meanings depending on the context: In some high schools, black is considered to denote gang membership; an elegant black dress is suitable for a formal dinner event but probably has a different meaning if worn by a bride's mother at her wedding.

Yet cultural contexts are not fixed and rigid. Rather, they are dynamic and fleeting, as Marcel Proust (1981) noted in writing about Paris in *Remembrance of Things Past:*

> *The reality that I had known no longer existed. It sufficed that Mme Swann did not appear, in the same attire and at the same moment, for the whole avenue to be altered. The places we have known do not belong only to the world of space on which we map them for our own convenience. None of them was ever more than a thin slice, held between the contiguous impressions that composed*

> *our life at that time; the memory of a particular image is but regret for a particular moment; and houses, roads, avenues are as fugitive, alas, as the years. (p. 462)*

As this excerpt shows, there is no "real" Paris. The city has different meanings at different times for different people, and for different reasons. For example, executives of multinational corporations moving into Paris see the city quite differently from immigrants arriving in Paris for personal reasons. Remember the tremendous unrest in the suburbs of Paris in the fall of 2005? Therefore, to think about cultural contexts as dynamic means that we must often think about how they change and in whose interests they change.

DEFINING CULTURAL SPACE

At the beginning of this book, we provided some background information about where we grew up. Our individual histories are important in understanding our identities. As writer John Preston (1991) explains, "Where we come from is important to who we are" (p. xi). There is nothing in the rolling hills of Delaware and Pennsylvania or the red clay of Georgia that biologically determined who Judith and Tom are. However, our identities are constructed, in part, in relation to the cultural milieu of the Mid-Atlantic region or the South. Each region has its own histories and ways of life that help us understand who we are. Our decision to tell you where we come from was meant to communicate something about who we think we are. So, although we can identify precisely the borders that mark out these spaces and make them real, or material, the spaces also are cultural in the ways that we imagine them to be.

The discourses that construct the meanings of cultural spaces are dynamic and ever changing. For example, the Delaware that Judith left behind and the Georgia that Tom left behind are not characterized by the same discourses that construct those places now. In addition, the relationship between those cultural spaces and our identities is negotiated in complex ways. For example, both of us participated in other, overlapping cultural spaces that influenced how we think about who we are. Thus, just because someone is from, say, Rhode Island or Samoa or India does not mean that his or her identity and communication practices are reducible to the history of those cultural spaces.

What is the communicative (discursive) relationship between cultural spaces and intercultural communication? Recall that we define cultural space as the particular configuration of the communication (discourse) that constructs meanings of various places. This may seem like an unwieldy definition, but it underscores the complexity of cultural spaces. A cultural space is not simply a particular location that has culturally constructed meanings. It can also be a metaphorical place from which we communicate. We can speak from a number of social locations, marked on the "map of society," that give added meaning to our communication. Thus, we may speak as parents, children, colleagues, siblings, customers, Nebraskans, and a myriad of other "places." All of these are cultural spaces.

POINT *of* VIEW

OBAMA'S LAPELS

In a television interview in Fall 2007, presidential candidate Barack Obama was asked why he wasn't wearing an American flag lapel pin worn by many politicians. Some in the audience felt that wearing a flag pin is a sign of patriotism and shows visible support for the United States in a time of war—a prerequisite for being a viable candidate for the office of the president of the United States.

> *"The truth is that right after 9/11 I had a pin," Mr. Obama replied. "Shortly after 9/11, particularly because as we're talking about the Iraq war, that became a substitute for, I think, true patriotism, which is speaking out on issues that are of importance to our national security." "I decided I won't wear that pin on my chest," he added. "Instead I'm gonna' try to tell the American people what I believe what will make this country great and hopefully that will be a testimony to my patriotism. . . . . My attitude is that I'm less concerned about what you're wearing on your lapel than what's in your heart. And you show your patriotism by how you treat your fellow Americans, especially those who served."*

Source: From J. Zeleny, (2007, October 4). "Obama's Lapels." *New York Times.* Retrieved March 21, 2008 from http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/04/obamas-lapels/.

Cultural Identity and Cultural Space

Home Cultural spaces influence how we think about ourselves and others. One of the earliest cultural spaces we experience is our home. As noted previously, nonverbal communication often involves issues of status. The home is no exception. As English professor Paul Fussell (1983) notes, "Approaching any house, one is bombarded with class signals" (p. 82). Fussell highlights the semiotic system of social class in the American home—from the way the lawn is maintained, to the kind of furniture within the home, to the way the television is situated. These signs of social class are not always so obvious from all class positions, but we often recognize the signs.

Even if our home does not reflect the social class to which we aspire, it may be a place of identification. We often model our own lives on the patterns from our childhood homes. Although this is not always the case, the home can be a place of safety and security. African American writer bell hooks (1990) remembers:

> *When I was a young girl the journey across town to my grandmother's house was one of the most intriguing experiences. . . . I remember this journey not just because of the stories I would hear. It was a movement away from the segregated blackness of our community into a poor white neighborhood [where] we would have to pass that terrifying whiteness—those white faces on porches staring down on us with hate. . . . Oh! that feeling of safety, of arrival, of homecoming when we finally reached the edges of her yard. (p. 41)*

Home, of course, is not the same as the physical location it occupies or the building (the house) at that location. Home is variously defined in terms of specific addresses, cities, states, regions, and even nations. Although we might have historical ties to a particular place, not everyone has the same relationship between those places and their own identities. Indeed, the relationship between place and cultural identity varies. Writer Steven Saylor (1991) explains,

> *Texas is a long way, on the map and otherwise, from San Francisco. "Steven," said my mother once, "you live in another country out there." She was right, and what I feel when I fly from California to Texas must be what an expatriate from any country feels returning to his childhood home. . . . Texas is home, but Texas is also a country whose citizenship I voluntarily renounced. (p. 119)*

The discourses surrounding Texas and giving meaning to Texas no longer "fit" Saylor's sense of who he is or wants to be. We all negotiate various relationships to the cultural meanings attached to the particular places or spaces we inhabit. Consider writer Harlan Greene's (1991) relationship to his hometown in South Carolina:

> *Now that I no longer live there, I often think longingly of my hometown of Charleston. My heart beats faster and color rushes to my cheek whenever I hear someone mentioning her; I lean over and listen, for even hearing the name casts a spell. Mirages rise up, and I am as overcome and drenched in images as a runner just come from running. I see the steeples, the streets, the lush setting. (p. 55)*

Despite his attachment to Charleston, Greene does not believe that Charleston feels the same way toward him. He explains, "But I still think of Charleston; I return to her often and always will. I think of her warmly. I claim her now, even though I know she will never claim me" (p. 67).

The complex relationships we have between various places and our identities resist simplistic reduction. These three writers—hooks, Saylor, and Greene—have negotiated different sentiments toward "home." In doing so, each demonstrates the complex dialectical tensions that exist between identity and location.

Neighborhood One significant type of cultural space that emerged in U.S. cities in the latter 19th and early 20th centuries was the ethnic or racial neighborhood. (See Figure 7-4.) Historical studies show, however, that the ethnic neighborhoods of the European immigrants were rarely inhabited by only one ethnic group, despite memories to the contrary. According to labor historian D. R. Roediger (2005), even the heart of Little Italy in Chicago was 47% nonItalian, and "No single side of even one square block in the street between 1890 and 1930 was found to be 100 percent Italian. . . . The percentage of Russians, Czechs, Italians and Poles living in segregated neighborhoods ranged from 37 percent to 61 percent" (p. 164). However, this type of real segregation was reserved for the African Americans—where 93 percent of African Americans lived in ghettos. By law and custom, and under different political pressures, some cities developed segregated neighborhoods. Malcolm X (Malcolm X & Haley, 1964), in his

FIGURE 7-4 Many cities abound with multiple cultural spaces. In this photo, several different cultural contexts are adjacent and emphasize the increasing significance of multiculturalism. How would people in this urban place experience cultural spaces differently from people who live in less diverse cultural spaces? How might it influence their intercultural communication patterns? (© *Robert Brenner/PhotoEdit, Inc.*)

autobiography, tells of the strict laws that governed where his family could live after their house burned down:

> *My father prevailed on some friends to clothe and house us temporarily; then he moved us into another house on the outskirts of East Lansing. In those days Negroes weren't allowed after dark in East Lansing proper. There's where Michigan State University is located; I related all of this to an audience of students when I spoke there in January, 1963. . . . I told them how East Lansing harassed us so much that we had to move again, this time two miles out of town, into the country. (pp. 3–4)*

The legacy of "white-only" areas pervades the history of the United States and the development of its cultural geography. The segregation of African Americans was not accidental. Beginning in 1890 until the late 1960s (the fair-housing legislation), whites in America created thousands of whites-only towns, commonly known as "sundown towns," a reference to the signs often posted at their city limits that warned, as one did in Hawthorne, California, in the 1930s: "Nigger, Don't Let the Sun Set on YOU in Hawthorne." In fact, historian J. Loewen (2005) claims that, during that 70-year period, "probably a majority of all incorporated places [in the United States] kept out African Americans."

Neighborhoods exemplify how power influences intercultural contact. Thus, some cultural groups defined who got to live where and dictated the rules by which other groups lived. These rules were enforced through legal means

and by harassment. For bell hooks and Malcolm X, the lines of segregation were clear and unmistakable.

In San Francisco, different racial politics constructed and isolated Chinatown. The boundaries that demarcated the acceptable place for Chinese and Chinese Americans to live were strictly enforced through violence:

> *The sense of being physically sealed within the boundaries of Chinatown was impressed on the few immigrants coming into the settlement by frequent stonings which occurred as they came up Washington or Clay Street from the piers. It was perpetuated by attacks of white toughs in the adjacent North Beach area and downtown around Union Square, who amused themselves by beating Chinese who came into these areas. "In those days, the boundaries were from Kearny to Powell, and from California to Broadway. If you ever passed them and went out there, the white kids would throw stones at you," Wei Bat Liu told us. (Nee & Nee, 1974, p. 60)*

In contrast to Malcolm X's exclusion from East Lansing, the Chinese of San Francisco were forced to live in a marked-off territory. Yet we must be careful not to confuse the experience of Chinese in San Francisco with the experiences of all Chinese in the United States. For example, a different system developed in Savannah, Georgia, around 1900:

> *Robert Chung Chan advised his kinsmen and the other newly arrived Chinese to live apart from each other. He understood the distrust of Chinatowns that Caucasians felt in San Francisco and New York. . . . Robert Chung Chan, probably more than anyone else, prevented a Chinatown from developing in Savannah. (Pruden, 1990, p. 25)*

Nor should we assume that vast migrations of Chinese necessarily led to the development of Chinatowns in other cities around the world. The settlement of Chinese immigrants in the 13th Arrondissement of Paris, for example, reflects a completely different intersection between cultures: "There is no American-style Chinatown [*Il n'y a pas de Chinatown à la américaine*]" in Paris (Costa-Lascoux & Yu-Sion, 1995, p. 197).

Within the context of different power relations and historical forces, settlement patterns of other cultural groups created various ethnic enclaves across the U.S. landscape. For example, many small towns in the Midwest were settled by particular European groups. Thus, in Iowa, Germans settled in Amana, Dutch in Pella, and Czechs and Slovaks in Cedar Rapids. Cities, too, have their neighborhoods, based on settlement patterns. South Philadelphia is largely Italian American, South Boston is largely Irish American, and Overtown in Miami is largely African American. Although it is no longer legal to mandate that people live in particular districts or neighborhoods based on their racial or ethnic backgrounds, the continued existence of such neighborhoods underscores their historical development and ongoing functions. This is especially true in Detroit, Michigan—the most segregated metropolitan region in the country—where the 8-mile road was made famous by the title and the location of the film starring Detroit hip-hop artist Eminem. The eight-mile, eight-lane road separates one city that is 91% white from the other that is overwhelmingly African American

POINT *of* VIEW

EIGHT MILE ROAD

Sometimes called Detroit's mini Berlin Wall, sometimes called the Wailing Wall, this seemingly innocent looking wall in Joe Louis Park does little to betray its shameful past.

After World War I, some black residents of Detroit moved into a then rural and vacant area near the intersection of Wyoming and Eight Mile. In 1940, a developer sought to build homes for middle income whites in a nearby area. However, the Federal Housing Administration's policies of that era precluded their approving loans in racially mixed areas. To secure FHA approval, this developer put up a wall six feet high, one foot in width and one half mile in length, to clearly demark the white and black areas. His wall led FHA to approve loans for his project.

Built in 1940, this wall presaged the racial divisions that have come to be symbolized by Eight Mile Road. (© *Clayton Sharrard/PhotoEdit, Inc.*)

Source: http://detroityes.com/webisodes/2002/8mile/021106-04-8mile-berlin-wall.htm.

(Chinni, 2002). (See Point of View box.) Economics, family ties, social needs, and education are some factors in the perpetuation of these cultural spaces.

Similar spaces exist in other countries as well. Remember the days of rioting and car burning that took place in the Parisian suburbs in the fall of 2005? Guillaume Parmentier, the head of the French Institute, commented on the

relationship between place and human relations: "We are the victims of our architecture," he said, referring to the sterile high-rise ghettos populated by France's Muslim immigrants. They are the French equivalent of ghettos or "*zones de no-droit*" (lawless areas) where police do not go as a matter of policy. Instead, there are checkpoints on the perimeter of these high-rise islands, and those who live there are left to fend for themselves (Hoagland, 2005).

The relationships among identity, power, and cultural space are quite complex. Power relations influence who (or what) gets to claim who (or what), and under what conditions. Some subcultures are accepted and promoted within a particular cultural space, others are tolerated, and still others may be unacceptable. Identifying with various cultural spaces is a negotiated process that is difficult (and sometimes impossible) to predict and control. The key to understanding the relationships among culture, power, people, and cultural spaces is to think dialectically.

Regionalism Ongoing regional and religious conflict, as well as nationalism and ethnic revival, point to the continuing struggles over who gets to define whom. Such conflicts are not new, though. In fact, some cultural spaces (such as Jerusalem) have been sites of struggle for many centuries.

Although regions are not always clearly marked on maps of the world, many people identify quite strongly with particular regions. **Regionalism** can be expressed in many ways, from symbolic expressions of identification to armed conflict. Within the United States, people may identify themselves or others as southerners, New Englanders, and so on. In Canada, people from Montreal might identify more strongly with the province of Quebec than with their country. Similarly, some Corsicans might feel a need to negotiate their identity with France. Sometimes people fly regional flags, wear particular kinds of clothes, celebrate regional holidays, and participate in other cultural activities to communicate their regional identification. However, regional expressions are not always simply celebratory, as the conflicts in Kosovo, Chechnya, Eritrea, Tibet, and Northern Ireland indicate.

regionalism Loyalty to a particular region that holds significant cultural meaning for that person.

National borders may seem straightforward, but they often conceal conflicting regional identities. To understand how intercultural communication may be affected by national borders, we must consider how history, power, identity, culture, and context come into play. Only by understanding these issues can we approach the complex process of human communication.

Changing Cultural Space

Chapter 8 discusses in greater detail the intercultural experiences of those who traverse cultural spaces and attempt to negotiate change. In this chapter, however, we want to focus on some of the driving needs of those who change cultural spaces.

Travel We often change cultural spaces when we travel. Traveling is frequently viewed as an unimportant leisure activity, but it is more than that. In terms of

STUDENT VOICES

This student explains her difficulty in knowing when she is in Japan as she moves through the airport and onto the airplane. How are these cultural spaces different from national borders?

Whenever I am at LAX [Los Angeles International Airport] on the way back to Japan, my sense of space gets really confused. For example, I fly into LAX from Phoenix, and as I line up at the Korean Air check-in counter, I see so many Asian-looking people (mostly Japanese and Koreans). Then, as I proceed, getting past the stores (e.g., duty-free shop) and walk farther to the departure gate, I see a lot less Americans and, eventually and practically, NOBODY but Asian-looking people (except for a very limited number of non-Asian-looking passengers on the same flight). So, when I wait at the gate, hearing Japanese around me, I get confused—"Where am I? Am I still in the U.S.? Or am I already back in Japan?" This confusion gets further heightened when I go aboard and see Japanese food served for meals and watch a Japanese film or TV program on the screen. So, to me, arriving at the Narita International Airport is not the moment of arriving in Japan. It already starts while I am in the U.S. This is just one of the many examples of postmodern cultural spaces that I have experienced in my life.

—Sakura

intercultural communication, traveling changes cultural spaces in ways that often transform the traveler. Changing cultural spaces means changing who you are and how you interact with others. Perhaps the old saying "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" holds true today as we cross cultural spaces more frequently than ever.

On a recent trip to Belgium, Tom flew nonstop on British Airways from Phoenix to London and then on to Brussels. Because the entire flight was conducted in English, Tom did not have a sense of any transition from English to French. Unlike flying the now defunct Sabena (Belgian National Airlines) from the United States to Belgium, flying British Airways provided no cultural transition space between Arizona and Belgium. Thus, when he got off the plane in Brussels, Tom experienced a more abrupt cultural and language transition, from an English environment to a Flemish/French environment.

Do you alter your communication style when you encounter travelers who are not in their traditional cultural space? Do you assume they should interact in the ways prescribed by your cultural space? These are some of the issues that travel raises.

Migration People also change cultural spaces when they relocate. Moving, of course, involves a different kind of change in cultural spaces than traveling. In traveling, the change is fleeting, temporary, and usually desirable; it is something that travelers seek out. However, people who migrate do not always seek out this change. For example, in recent years, many people have been forced from their strife-torn homelands in Rwanda and in Bosnia and have settled elsewhere. Many immigrants leave their homelands simply so they can survive. But they

often find it difficult to adjust to the change, especially if the language and customs of the new cultural space are unfamiliar.

Even within the United States, people may have trouble adapting to new surroundings when they move. Tom remembers that when northerners moved to the South they often were unfamiliar with the custom of banks closing early on Wednesday or with the traditional New Year's Day foods of black-eyed peas and collards. Ridiculing the customs of their new cultural space simply led to further intercultural communication problems.

Postmodern Cultural Spaces

Space has become increasingly important in the negotiation of cultural and social identities, and so to culture more generally. As Leah Vande Berg (1999) explains, scholars in many areas "have noted that identity and knowledge are profoundly spatial (as well as temporal), and that this condition structures meaningful embodiment and experience" (p. 249). **Postmodern cultural spaces** are places that are defined by cultural practices—languages spoken, identities enacted, rituals performed—and they often change as new people move in and out of these spaces. Imagine being in a small restaurant when a large group of people arrives, all of whom are speaking another language. How has this space changed? Whose space is it? As different people move in and out of this space, how does the cultural character change?

postmodern cultural spaces Places that are defined by cultural practices—languages spoken, identities enacted, rituals performed—and that often change as new people move in and out of these spaces.

In his study of listening among the Blackfeet, Donal Carbaugh (1999) reports that listening is intimately connected to place as a cultural space. It is both a physical location and a cultural phenomenon. Through his cultural informant, Two Bears, Carbaugh notes that

> *in his oral utterance to us about "listening," in this landscape, he is commenting about a non-oral act of listening to this landscape. This nonverbal act is itself a deeply cultural form of action in which the Blackfeet persona and the physical place become intimately linked, in a particularly Blackfeet way. (p. 257)*

But these places are dynamic, and "listening" is not limited to fixed locations: "Some kinds of places are apparently more appropriate for this kind of Blackfeet 'listening' than are others, although—according to Two Bears—'just about anywhere' might do" (p. 257). Physical place, in this sense, can become a cultural space in that it is infused with cultural meanings. Think about how the same physical place might have a different meaning to someone from a different cultural group.

Another set of postmodern spaces that are quite familiar are those of the Internet. There are MOOs (multiobject domains) and MUDs (multiuser domains) and chat rooms where people meet in real time and interact primarily for recreational purposes—assuming their own or another identity (Herring, 2004). There are other Internet spaces like message boards, instant messengers (IMs), and blogs for asynchronous communication (Herring, 2004). People meet in these places for fun, to gain information, or as a place to experience a supportive community (e.g., an online chat room where Japanese elderly meet for

support [Kanayama, 2003], or a bulletin board where gay, lesbian, and transgendered people can offer support and exchange useful information). And increasingly, social network sites (SMS) like MySpace and Facebook are places where young people socialize (Boyd, 2007). See Point of View box "Social Network Sites Around the World."

Communication scholars have investigated how these virtual place/spaces affect the communication that occurs there. Teske (2002) explores the implications of this communication that is disembodied—unconnected to time and physical space—and suggests that interacting in these spaces makes us increasingly individualistic and isolated, in spite of communicating through a great medium for *connecting* people. Others suggest that virtual spaces offer a different space for interacting and that cyber relationships are formed, maintained, and dissolved in much the same way (Carter, 2004). We'll explore cyber relationships further in Chapter 10.

The fluid and fleeting nature of cultural space stands in sharp contrast to the 18th- and 19th-century notions of space, which promoted land ownership, surveys, borders, colonies, and territories. No passport is needed to travel in the postmodern cultural space, because there are no border guards. The dynamic nature of postmodern cultural spaces underscores its response to changing cultural needs. The space exists only as long as it is needed in its present form.

Postmodern cultural spaces are both tenuous and dynamic. They are created within existing places, without following any particular guide. There is no marking off of territory, no sense of permanence or official recognition. The postmodern cultural space exists only while it is used.

The ideology of fixed spaces and categories is currently being challenged by postmodernist notions of space and location. Phoenix, for example, which became a city relatively recently, has no Chinatown, or Japantown, or Koreatown, no Irish district, or Polish neighborhood, or Italian area. Instead, people of Polish descent, for example, might live anywhere in the metropolitan area but congregate for special occasions or for specific reasons. On Sundays, the Polish Catholic Mass draws many people from throughout Phoenix. When people want to buy Polish breads and pastries, they can go to the Polish bakery and also speak Polish there. Ethnic identity is only one of several identities that these people negotiate. When they desire recognition and interaction based on their Polish heritage, they can meet that wish. When they seek other forms of identification, they can go to places where they can be Phoenix Suns fans, or community volunteers, and so on. Ethnic identity is neither the sole factor nor necessarily the most important one at all times in their lives.

The markers of ethnic life in Phoenix are the urban sites where people congregate when they desire ethnic cultural contact. At other times, they may frequent different locations in expressing aspects of their identities. In this sense, the postmodern urban space is dynamic and allows people to participate in the communication of identity in new ways (Drzewiecka & Nakayama, 1998).

Cultural spaces can also be metaphorical, with historically defined places serving as sources of contemporary identity negotiation in new spaces. In her

SOCIAL NETWORK SITES AROUND THE WORLD

While MySpace and Facebook are popular in the United States, social network sites (SNS) like Tagworld, Bebo, Piczo, Faceparty, and Mixi took off in places such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, and Japan. In China, an instant messaging service called QQ added social network site features, as did the popular Korean community site Cyworld; both are popular across all age groups in China and South Korea.

Participation tends to follow cultural and linguistic lines, although some draw users from different world regions; the two with the most "balanced" user bases worldwide are Tagged and Hi5. Thirty percent of Tagged users are from Asia and the Pacific region, 22% from North America, 14% from Latin America, 23% from Europe, 10% from Africa and the Middle East. Hi5, similarly, has 31% European users, 24% Latin American, 21% Asia-Pacific, 15% North American, and 8% African/Middle Eastern.

MySpace and Facebook both have large percentages of their users in North America (around 65%) with sizeable portions in Europe (15%–25%) and single-digit numbers in all other regions. Bebo, most popular in the U.K., is largely the opposite, with a 62% European base and a 22% North American base. Orkut has about a 50% user base in Latin America, the same in Asia-Pacific, and almost none anywhere else. Friendster, meanwhile, leans the most toward a single geographic market: about 90% users in the Asia-Pacific region.

Sources: From D. Boyd, "Why Youth (heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life." In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media* (MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Learning). (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007.) And C. McCarthy (2007, July 31), *ComScore's Latest Numbers: Worldwide Social-Networking Growth.* Retrieved March 21, 2008 from http://www.news.com/8301-13577_3-9752857-36.html.

study of academia, Olga Idriss Davis (1999) turns to the historical role of the kitchen in African American women's lives and uses the kitchen legacy as a way to rethink the university. She notes that "the relationship between the kitchen and the Academy [university] informs African American women's experience and historically interconnects their struggles for identity" (p. 370). In this sense, the kitchen is a metaphorical cultural space that is invoked in an entirely new place, the university. Again, this postmodern cultural space is not material but metaphoric, and it allows people to negotiate their identities in new places.

INTERNET RESOURCES

http://nonverbal.ucsc.edu/
This Web site provided by the University of California-Santa Cruz allows students to explore and test their ability to read and interpret nonverbal

communication. The site provides videos that examine nonverbal codes, including personal space and gestures, to better understand cross-cultural communication.

www.cba.uni.edu/buscomm/nonverbal/Culture.htm
This Web site provided by the University of Northern Iowa outlines how nonverbal communication varies across cultures in relation to Hofstede's value dimensions.

http://nonverbal.ucsc.edu/gest.html
This link from a Web site provided by the University of California-Santa Cruz allows students to explore and test their ability to read and interpret nonverbal communication and culture.

http://webdesign.about.com/od/color/a/bl_colorculture.htm
This Web page is dedicated to providing information pertaining to the color symbolism that exists throughout different cultures. Its purpose is to allow Web page designers to understand how their usage of color might be interpreted by different groups and world regions. The page also provides informative links on how gender, age, class, and current trends also play a factor in the meaning of color.

SUMMARY

- Nonverbal communication differs from verbal communication in two ways: It is more unconscious and learned implicitly.
- It can reinforce, substitute for, or contradict verbal communication.
- Nonverbal communication communicates relational meaning, status, and deception.
- Research investigating the universality of nonverbal behaviors includes comparison of primate behavior, behavior of deaf/blind children, cross-cultural studies, and search for universal social needs filled by nonverbal behaviors.
- Nonverbal codes include facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, paralanguage, chronemics, and silence.
- Sometimes cultural differences in nonverbal behaviors can lead to stereotyping of others and overt discrimination.
- Cultural space influences cultural identity and includes homes, neighborhoods, regions, and nations.
- Two ways of changing cultural spaces are travel and migration.
- Postmodern cultural spaces, like cyberspace, are tenuous and dynamic.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does nonverbal communication differ from verbal communication?
2. What are some of the messages that we communicate through our nonverbal behaviors?
3. Which nonverbal behaviors, if any, are universal?
4. How do our cultural spaces affect our identities?
5. What role does power play in determining our cultural spaces?
6. What is the importance of cultural spaces to intercultural communication?
7. How do postmodern cultural spaces differ from modernist notions of cultural space?

Go to the self-quizzes on the Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/martinnakayama5 to further test your knowledge.

ACTIVITIES

1. *Cultural Spaces.* Think about the different cultural spaces in which you participate (clubs, churches, concerts, and so on). Select one of these spaces and describe when and how you enter and leave it. As a group, discuss the answers to the following questions:
   a. Which cultural spaces do many students share? Which are not shared by many students?
   b. Which cultural spaces, if any, are denied to some people?
   c. What factors determine whether a person has access to a specific cultural space?
2. *Nonverbal Rules.* Choose a cultural space that you are interested in studying. Visit this space on four occasions to observe how people there interact. Focus on one aspect of nonverbal communication (e.g., eye contact or proximity). List some rules that seem to govern this aspect of nonverbal communication. For example, if you are focusing on proximity, you might describe, among other things, how far apart people tend to stand when conversing. Based on your observations, list some prescriptions about proper (expected) nonverbal behavior in this cultural space. Share your conclusions with the class. To what extent do other students share your conclusions? Can we generalize about nonverbal rules in cultural spaces? What factors influence whether an individual follows unspoken rules of behavior?

CHAPTER

9

POPULAR CULTURE AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Differentiate between high and low culture.
2. Discuss the importance of popular culture as a public forum.
3. Identify the four characteristics of popular culture.
4. Identify some patterns of how people consume popular culture.
5. Identify some ways that people resist popular culture.
6. Describe some of the ways that popular culture influences how people understand another culture.
7. Explain the role of popular culture in stereotyping.
8. Explain how the global movement of popular culture influences people around the world.
9. Discuss the concerns of some governments about the influence of foreign media in their countries.

Originally broadcast in the Netherlands, *Big Brother* has expanded around the world from the U.S. and U.K. to Australia and Nigeria.. The 2007 season of *Big Brother* Australia features a diverse cast of participants, all of whom are Australian. Yet, because not all of them are white, one of the contestants wanted them evicted:

> *"Aussies, I don't think there are enough Aussies in the house," big brother contestant, Andrew said. The "Big Brother" contestant appeared to have analyzed the appearance of housemates in the house before declaring that maybe "Big Brother" should have a special eviction to non-appearing Australians in the house because according to him the "Aussies" seemed to be numbered by darker looking housemates. (Harris, 2007).*

Charges of racism and racist remarks in the Australian version have followed similar charges in the U.K. version. In discussing the racist comments made on the U.K. version of *Big Brother*, sociologist Steve Spencer observes: "Yes this is racism—the sort of everyday racism which is normally invisible—not overt, but in the private domain of the general population. Racist and xenophobic reactions like these 'private' conversations which are broadcast to a mass audience are a bizarre inversion of the everyday racism—the sneering comments, the cultural ignorance and intolerance which is commonplace in our society" (quoted in "Big Brother," 2007).

The popularity of *Big Brother* and reality television more generally opens up the private space of the home and interpersonal relationships to the public arena. The kinds of intercultural interaction and intercultural conflicts that take place in reality television are broadcast widely to a very large audience. These shows bring some of these cultural tensions into public discussion on various discussion boards, Web pages, newspapers, and other outlets.

This chapter explores one type of culture that is often overlooked by intercultural communication scholars but that plays an important role in the construction, maintenance, and experience of culture, particularly in intercultural interactions. This type of culture is popular culture.

LEARNING ABOUT CULTURES WITHOUT PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

As discussed in Chapter 8, people can experience and learn about other cultures by traveling to and relocating and living in other regions. But there will always be many places around the world that we have not visited and where we have not lived. How do we know about places we have never been? Much of what we know probably comes from popular culture—the media experience of films, television, music, videos, books, and magazines that most of us know and share. How does this experience affect intercultural communication?

The Power of Popular Culture

Neither Tom nor Judith has ever been to Brazil, Nigeria, India, Russia, or China. Yet both of us hold tremendous amounts of information about these places from the news, movies, TV shows, advertisements, and more. The kind and quality of information we all have about other places are influenced by popular culture. But the views that the media portray supplement the information we get from other sources. For example, audiences that see the movie *Jarhead* are likely to be familiar with the military mission in Iraq, even if they have not been in military service there. In this sense, popular culture is pervasive.

The complexity of popular culture is often overlooked. People express concern about the social effects of popular culture—for example, the influence of television violence on children, the role of certain kinds of music in causing violent behavior by some youths, and the relationship between heterosexual pornography and violence against women. Yet most people look down on the study of popular culture, as if this form of culture conveys nothing of lasting significance. So, on the one hand, we are concerned about the power of popular culture; on the other, we don't look on popular culture as a serious area of academic research. This inherent contradiction can make it difficult to investigate and discuss popular culture.

As U.S. Americans, we are in a unique position in relationship to popular culture. Products of U.S. popular culture are well known and circulate widely on the international market. The popularity of U.S. movies such as *Transformers* and *Spider Man 3*, of U.S. music stars such as Shakira and Carrie Underwood, and of U.S. television shows from *Grey's Anatomy* to *CSI* and *Desperate Housewives* creates an uneven flow of texts between the United States and other nations. Scholars Elihu Katz and Tamar Liebes (1987) have noted the "apparent ease with which American television programs cross cultural and linguistic frontiers. Indeed, the phenomenon is so taken for granted that hardly any systematic research has been done to explain the reasons why these programs are so successful" (p. 419).

In contrast, U.S. Americans are rarely exposed to popular culture from outside the United States. Exceptions to this largely one-way movement of popular culture include pop music stars who sing in English, such as Wyclef Jean (Haitian), Shakira (Colombian), and Céline Dion (French Canadian). Consider how difficult it is to find foreign films or television programs throughout most of the United States. Even when foreign corporations market their products in the United States, they almost always use U.S. advertising agencies—collectively known as "Madison Avenue." The apparent imbalance of cultural texts globally not only renders U.S. Americans more dependent on U.S.-produced popular culture but also can lead to cultural imperialism, a topic we discuss later in this chapter.

The study of popular culture has become increasingly important in the communication field. Although intercultural communication scholars traditionally have overlooked popular culture, we believe that it is a significant influence in intercultural interaction.

STUDENT VOICES

I was on my way to Rome from Newark last summer. Since I took the Polish Airlines, I had to make a stopover there in Warsaw. During my first morning in Warsaw, I got up, took a shower, and turned on the TV, just out of curiosity to see what was showing. I guess I expected to hear Polish, some local news and dramas, etc.

The first thing that jumped at me from the TV screen was Ricky Martin! Then followed Destiny's Child! I was shocked! U.S. popular culture really is everywhere! And I thought I already knew that! But I didn't expect it, all the way in Poland.

— Mina

What Is Popular Culture?

The 19th-century essayist and poet Matthew Arnold, who expressed concern about protecting civilization, defined *culture* as "the best that has been thought and said in the world"—a definition that emphasizes quality. In this context, many Western societies distinguish "high culture" from "low culture."

High culture refers to those cultural activities that are often the domain of the elite or the well-to-do: ballet, symphony, opera, great literature, and fine art. These activities sometimes are framed as *international* because supposedly they can be appreciated by audiences in other places, from other cultures, in different time periods. Their cultural value is seen as transcendent and timeless. To protect these cultural treasures, social groups build museums, symphony halls, and theaters. In fact, universities devote courses, programs, and even entire departments to the study of aspects of high culture.

In opposition to high culture is low culture, which refers to the activities of the nonelite: music videos, game shows, professional wrestling, stock car racing, graffiti art, TV talk shows, and so on. Traditionally, low-culture activities have been seen as unworthy of serious study—and so of little interest to museums or universities. The cultural values embedded in these activities were considered neither transcendent nor timeless.

The elitism reflected in the distinction between high and low culture points to the tensions in Western social systems. In recent decades, however, this distinction has begun to break down. Rapid social changes propelled universities to alter their policies and also have affected how we study intercultural communication. For example, the turbulent 1960s brought to the university a powerful new interest in ethnic studies, including African American studies and women's and gay and lesbian issues. These areas of study did not rely on the earlier distinctions between high and low culture. Rather, they contributed to a new conceptual framework by arguing for the legitimacy of other cultural forms that traditionally would have been categorized as low culture but were now framed as **popular culture.** Because of this elitist view of culture, the distinction between "high culture" and "low culture" has led to low culture being reconceptualized

popular culture A new name for *low culture,* referring to those cultural products that most people share and know about, including television, music, videos, and popular magazines.

as popular culture. Barry Brummett (1994), a contemporary rhetorician, offers the following definition: "Popular culture refers to those systems or artifacts that most people share and that most people know about" (p. 21). According to this definition, television, music videos, YouTube, Disney, advertising, soap operas, and popular magazines are systems of popular culture. In contrast, the symphony and the ballet do not qualify as popular culture because most people cannot identify much about them unless they have studied them.

So, popular culture often is seen as populist—including forms of contemporary culture that are made popular by and for the people. John Fiske (1989), professor of communication arts, explains,

> *To be made into popular culture, a commodity must also bear the interests of the people. Popular culture is not consumption, it is culture—the active process of generating and circulating meanings and pleasures within a social system: culture, however industrialized, can never be adequately described in terms of the buying and selling of commodities. (p. 23)*

In his study of popular Mexican American music in Los Angeles, ethnic studies professor George Lipsitz (1990) highlights the innovative, alternative ways that marginalized social groups are able to express themselves. In this study, he demonstrates how popular culture can arise by mixing and borrowing from other cultures: "The ability of musicians to learn from other cultures played a key role in their success as rock-and-roll artists" (p. 140). The popular speaks to—and resonates from—the people, but it does so through multiple cultural voices. Lipsitz continues,

> *The marginality of Chicano rock-and-roll musicians has provided them with a constant source of inspiration and a constant spur toward innovation that gained them the attention of mainstream audiences. But this marginal sensibility amounts to more than novelty or personal eccentricity; it holds legitimacy and power as the product of a real historical community's struggle with oppression. . . . As Chicano musicians demonstrate in their comments about their work, their music reflects a quite conscious cultural politic that seeks inclusion in the American mainstream by transforming it. (p. 159)*

Intercultural contact and intercultural communication play a central role in the creation and maintenance of popular culture. Yet, as Lipsitz points out, the popular is political and pleasurable, which further complicates how we think about popular culture.

There are four significant characteristics of popular culture: (1) It is produced by culture industries, (2) it differs from **folk culture,** (3) it is everywhere, and (4) it fills a social function. As Fiske (1989) points out, popular culture is nearly always produced within a capitalist system that sees the products of popular culture as commodities that can be economically profitable. They are produced by what are called **culture industries.** The Disney Corporation is a noteworthy example of a culture industry because it produces amusement parks, movies, cartoons, and a plethora of associated merchandise.

folk culture Traditional and nonmainstream cultural activities that are not financially driven.

culture industries Industries that produce and sell popular culture as commodities.

TABLE 9-1 THIS CHART HIGHLIGHTS SOME OF THE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN HIGH CULTURE, FOLK CULTURE, AND POPULAR CULTURE

Type	Definition	Who Knows It?	What Does It Look Like?
High culture	Elite aristocratic expressions of culture	Rich members of the political establishment	Opera, classic sculpture, symphony performances
Folk culture	Traditional and nonmainstream cultural activities that are not financially driven	Most cultural groups, but especially middle-class groups	Folk music
Popular culture	Ever-present cultural products designed for profitable consumption	Almost everyone in a social group	Mainstream music, movies, television, romance novels

More recently, communication scholars Joshua Gunn and Barry Brummett (2004) have challenged the second point that there is an important difference between folk culture and popular culture. They suggest, "We write as if there is a fundamental difference between a mass-produced and mass-marketed culture and a more authentic 'folk' culture or subculture. Such a binary is dissolving into a globally marketed culture. A few remaining pockets of folk culture remain here and there: on the Sea Islands, in Amish country, in departments of English. The rest of folk culture is now 50% off at Wal-Mart" (p. 707). In the new context of globalization, whatever happened to folk traditions and artifacts? Have they been unable to escape being mass-produced and marketed around the globe? Where would you look for folk culture today? Whatever happened to traditional folk dancing, quilting bees, and other forms of folk culture?

Popular culture is ubiquitous. We are bombarded with it, every day and everywhere. On average, U.S. Americans watch more than 40 hours of television per week. Movie theaters beckon us with the latest multimillion-dollar extravaganzas, nearly all U.S. made. Radio stations and music TV programs blast us with the hottest music groups performing their latest hits. (See Figure 9-1.) And we are inundated with a staggering number of advertisements and commercials daily.

It is difficult to avoid popular culture. Not only is it ubiquitous but it also serves an important social function. How many times have you been asked by friends and family for your reaction to a recent movie or TV program? Academicians Horace Newcomb and Paul Hirsch (1987) suggest that television serves as a cultural forum for discussing and working out our ideas on a variety of topics, including those that emerge from the programs themselves. Television, then, has a powerful social function—to serve as a forum for dealing with social issues.

FIGURE 9-1 Shakira is a multilingual Colombian singer whose songs have hit the charts in many countries, including Turkey and the United States. She exemplifies non-U.S. popular culture making an impact internationally. (© *Chris Polk/FilmMagic/Getty Images*)

In his study of the role of the local newspaper, *The Newsboy*, in restoring the image of Jasper, Texas, after the dragging murder of James Byrd, Jr., Jack Glascock (2004) found that the newspaper's editorials played an important role in guiding the community response to the hate crime. He notes that the "paper's involvement in community affairs at the outset allowed it to convey the agreed-upon objectives of the crisis discourse to the rest of the community. As the crisis played out the paper extended its leadership role by continuing, dropping or modifying its strategies. The paper's opinion pages also provided a forum for the community to participate, primarily by bolstering the town's image, both within the community [and] to outsiders" (p. 45). In this case, the paper is both a forum for public discussion and a leader in community restoration.

In a similar study, communication scholars Dreama Moon and Tom Nakayama (2005) analyzed newspaper accounts of the murder of Arthur "J. R." Warren in West Virginia. Although the small town where he was murdered did not have a local paper, they found that the media coverage did highlight significant differences in how African Americans, gays and lesbians, and white heterosexual residents experienced and perceived life there. Through the media, African Americans and gays and lesbians were able to offer an alternative view that differed from the dominant view of idealized small-town life. Again, newspapers served as a forum for discussion of this tragic event and related aspects of everyday life and community in this small West Virginia town.

In contrast, not all popular culture may serve as a forum for public deliberation. In his study of baseball tributes in ballparks after the attacks of September 11, 2001, Michael Butterworth (2005) found that these rituals tended to discourage

expression of opinions that differed from a nationalistic patriotism at the expense of democratic deliberation. Butterworth describes these baseball tributes and notes, "If baseball can be understood as a representative institution of American democratic culture, then the ways in which it performs (or fails to perform) democratically merit scrutiny and criticism. In the aftermath of unprecedented tragedy (for Americans), baseball could have been a site not only for communal healing but also for productively engaging the pluralism that the game does or should represent" (p. 122). Baseball tributes, then, are a form of popular culture that does not serve a cultural forum for the democratic exchange of ideas.

The ways that people negotiate their relationships to popular culture are complex, and it is this complexity that makes understanding the role of popular culture in intercultural communication so difficult. Clearly, we are not passive recipients of this deluge of popular culture. We are, in fact, quite active in our consumption of or resistance to popular culture, a notion that we turn to next.

CONSUMING AND RESISTING POPULAR CULTURE

Consuming Popular Culture

cultural texts Popular culture messages whether television shows, movies, advertisements, or other widely disseminated messages.

Faced with this onslaught of **cultural texts,** people negotiate their ways through popular culture in quite different ways. Popular culture texts do not have to win over the majority of people to be "popular." People often seek out or avoid specific forms of popular culture. For example, romance novels are the best-selling form of literature, but many readers have no interest in such books. Likewise, whereas many people enjoy watching soap operas or professional wrestling, many others find no pleasure in those forms of popular culture.

encoding The process of creating a message for others to understand.

decoding The process of interpreting a message.

Stuart Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model might be helpful here. Hall is careful to place "meaning" at several stages in the communication process, so that it is never fixed but is always being constructed within various contexts. Thus, in his model, he places **encoding**—or the construction of textual meaning by popular culture institutions—within specific social contexts. **Decoding**—the interpretation of the text's meaning by receivers—is performed by various audiences in different social contexts, whose members have different interests at stake. In this way, the meaning(s) of various popular culture texts can be seen as negotiated throughout the communication process. The "real meaning" of any popular culture text cannot simply be located in either the senders or the receivers. Although this model may seem to suggest tremendous unpredictability in popular culture, people do not create just any meaning out of these texts. We are always enmeshed in our social identities, which help guide our interpretations as decoders. Encoders, in turn, rely on these larger identity formations to help them fashion their texts to sell to particular markets. (See Figure 9-2.)

For example, communication researcher Antonio La Pastina (2004) did an interpretive study of how people in a rural Brazilian community, Macambira in northeastern Brazil, decoded the meanings of the telenovela *The Cattle King.*

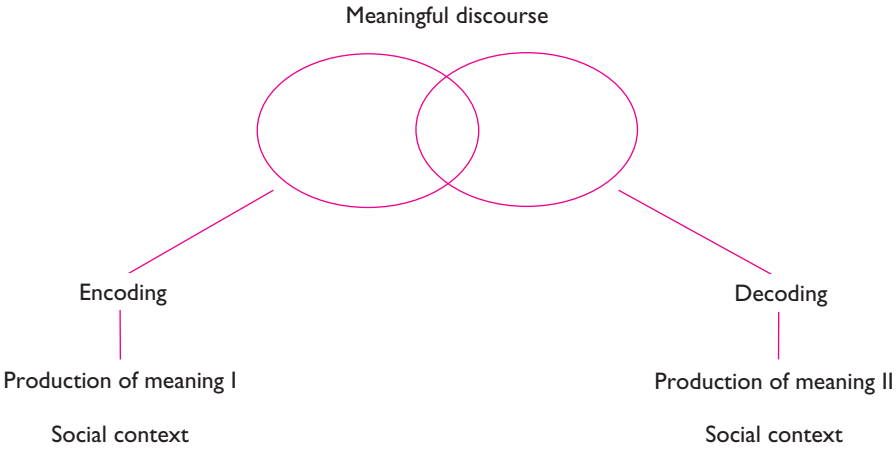


FIGURE 9-2 Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model. Try to use this model to discuss how different people might arrive at different interpretations of your favorite TV show.

This telenovela is set in urban Brazil and features many melodramatic stories about socioeconomic class, romance, and sexuality. In interviewing the people of this very rural and isolated community, he found that these viewers tended to interpret the telenovelas based on their own cultural values about gender, relationships, and sexuality. He also found that these telenovelas tended to shape how the viewers saw urban life in Brazil. Although the producers of this telenovela may not have encoded the shows with this audience in mind when they wrote and produced these narratives, the viewers in this community used their own cultural values to decode their own meanings of the shows.

There is some unpredictability in how people navigate popular culture. After all, not all men enjoy watching football, and not all women like to read romance novels. However, some profiles emerge. Advertising offices of popular magazines even make their **reader profiles** available to potential advertisers. These reader profiles portray what the magazine believes its readership "looks" like. Although reader profiles do not follow a set format, they generally detail the average age, gender, individual and household incomes, and so on, of their readership. The reader profile for *Vogue*, for example, will not look like the reader profile for *Esquire*.

reader profiles Portrayals of readership demographics prepared by magazines.

Each magazine targets a particular readership and then sells this readership to advertisers. The diversity of the U.S. American population generates very different readerships among a range of magazines, in several ways. Let's explore some of the ways this diversity is played out in the magazine market.

How Magazines Respond to the Needs of Cultural Identities A wide range of magazines respond to the different social and political needs of groups with different cultural identities. You may already be familiar with magazines geared

toward a male or a female readership. But many other kinds of magazines serve important functions for other cultural groups. For example, *Ebony* is one of many magazines that cultivate an African American readership. Similar magazines exist for other cultural identities. *Hispanic Magazine*, published in Florida, targets a Latino/a audience; *The Advocate* claims to be the national newsmagazine for gays and lesbians. These magazines offer information and viewpoints that are generally unavailable in other magazines. They function as a discussion forum for concerns that mainstream magazines often overlook. They also tend to affirm, by their very existence, these other cultural identities, which sometimes are invisible or are silenced in the mainstream culture.

In addition, many non-English-language newspapers circulate among readers of specific ethnic groups, serving the same functions as the magazines just mentioned. However, because their production costs are low, they are better able to survive and reach their limited readerships. For instance, newspapers printed in Cantonese, Spanish, Vietnamese, Japanese, French, Korean, Arabic, Polish, Russian, and other languages reach non-English-speaking readers in the United States.

How Readers Negotiate Consumption Readers actively negotiate their way through cultural texts such as magazines—consuming those that fulfill important cultural needs and resisting those that do not. Hence, it is possible to be a reader of magazines that reflect various cultural configurations; that is, someone might read several women's magazines and Spanish-language newspapers and magazines, as well as *Newsweek* and *Southern Living*.

Cultural Texts Versus Cultural Identities We must be careful not to conflate the magazines with the cultural identities they are targeting. After all, many publications offer different points of view on any given topic. Thus, there is no single, unified "Asian American position" on immigration reform or any "Latino position" on affirmative action. Rather, there can be a preponderance of opinions on some issues. These often are played out through popular culture forums.

People come together through cultural magazines and newspapers to affirm and negotiate their relationships with their cultural identities. In this way, the texts resemble cultural spaces, which we discussed in Chapter 7. However, magazines are but one example of how popular culture can function. Not all popular culture texts are easily correlated to particular cultural groups. Think about the various TV programs, movies, mass-market paperbacks, and tabloids that flood our everyday lives. The reasons that people enjoy some over others cannot easily be determined. People negotiate their relationships to popular culture in complex ways.

Resisting Popular Culture

Sometimes people actively seek out particular popular culture texts to consume; other times they resist cultural texts. But resistance to popular culture is a complex process. Avoiding certain forms of popular culture is one kind of resistance, but resistance can occur in a variety of ways.

Let's look at the ongoing controversy over the use of the logo of the University of North Dakota's Fighting Sioux. In August 2005, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) placed "a ban on Indian imagery that it considers 'hostile or abusive'" (Borzi, 2005, p. B15) in postseason play. In appealing the NCAA division, the University of North Dakota and the NCAA have settled this dispute. This settlement means that "the university will have three years to obtain approval of the mascot from the two Sioux tribes with a significant presence in the state" (U. of North Dakota, 2007). If they do receive tribal support, the university can keep the mascot. If not, then they must change the mascot.

Let's look at how this logo creates strong feelings on both sides and how people are responding to the NCAA decision. There is mixed reaction to the meaning of the way the logo is used. Among American Indians as well there is disagreement about the use of the logo. It is important to recognize that all members of any cultural group have diverse reactions to popular images. For example, not all women are offended by the Hooters restaurant/bar chain that features scantily clad waitresses. Some women, however, do not like the way that women are represented at Hooters.

If we return to our touchstones to examine this controversy, we can see how communication, culture, power, and context play out in this example. American Indians are a relatively small segment of the population. At the University of North Dakota, there were 378 American Indian students out of 12,954 students in the 2005–2006 academic year (http://www.und.edu/profile/). They are the largest minority group at UND, but only about 3% of the student population. The U.S. census taken in 2000 shows that 642,200 people live in the state of North Dakota, and 31,329 are American Indian, or about 4.9% of the population (http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/c2kbr01-15.pdf). To whom, then, is this logo communicating? Which groups have a dominant voice in how the logo is interpreted? Think about who is communicating with whom. What kind of power differential is at work here when primarily non–American Indians choose and circulate these images to mostly non–American Indians?

The University of North Dakota's Web page describes the image in this way: "Since the early 1930s, the University of North Dakota athletic teams have been known as the Fighting Sioux and have used an American Indian head representation as their symbol. UND officially adopted the name 'Fighting Sioux' in honor of the first inhabitants of the region and some of the American Indian tribes of the state" (http://www.universityrelations.und.edu/logoappeal/history.html). The president of the university, Charles Kupchella, says, "I don't have a clue why anyone would take offense to something done respectfully and clearly meant as an honor" (quoted in Borzi, p. B16).

The context is important as well. As we noted earlier in this book, we need to consider the historical context as one important frame that helps us understand how meaning is created in intercultural contexts. The history of American Indian imagery is reflected in a distorted media image: "The Hollywood Indian is a mythological being who exists nowhere but within the fertile imaginations of its movie actors, producers, and directors" (Jojola, 1998, p. 12). How might these other distorting images influence the reading of this logo?

Because some of these stereotypes are negative, they have negative consequences for members of that social group. In his study of the controversy at the University of North Dakota over their mascot, the Fighting Sioux, communication scholar Raúl Tovares (2002) points to the climate at sporting events, which highlights the ways in which stereotypes, cultural values, and popular culture images can come together. (See Figure 9-3.) He explains,

> *Hockey and football games have become sites where offensive images of Native Americans are common. Students from NDSU [North Dakota State University] show up at athletic events with cartoonish images of bison forcing themselves sexually on Native Americans. At "sporting" events, it is not uncommon to hear phrases such as "kill the Sioux," "Sioux suck," "f———k the Sioux," and "rape Sioux women." Such phrases, many Native American students claim, are a direct result of the Fighting Sioux logo. (p. 91)*

Now a Division I school, NDSU (North Dakota State University) is not scheduled to play the University of North Dakota in football. North Dakota State does not currently host a men's hockey team.Think about the ways that this mascot might circulate on jackets, T-shirts, cartoons, and other popular culture forms. How does popular culture represent an important site for negotiating this cultural identity? Why do non–Native Americans have a dominant voice and more power in these representations?

Finally, an interpretivist who is studying the logo controversy might go to the University of North Dakota and speak to the people there. One professor highlights this aspect of the controversy: "'Unless you're here, you don't know what it's like and how nasty it can get,' said a psychology professor, Doug McDonald, who is Sioux. 'I've had students in my office in tears because of the harassment we get'" (quoted in Borzi, 2005, pp. B15–B16). The logo and associated meaning (e.g., the sale of "Sioux-per dogs") create an environment in which some students clearly see negative meanings.

Here we saw a clear example of a group's resistance to popular culture and popular images because they construct American Indian identity in undesirable ways. Indeed, people often resist particular forms of popular culture by refusing to engage in them. For example, some people feel the need to avoid television and even decide not to own televisions. Some people refuse to go to movies that contain violence or sexuality because they do not find pleasure in such films. In this case, these kinds of conscious decisions are often based on concerns about the ways that cultural products should be understood as political.

Resistance to popular culture can also be related to social roles. Likewise, some people have expressed concern about the supposedly homophobic or racist ideologies embedded in Disney films such as *Aladdin* (Boone, 1995). *Aladdin* plays into Western fears of homosexuality and the tradition of projecting those concerns on Arab culture. Resistance stems mainly from concerns about the representation of various social groups. Popular culture plays a powerful role in how we think about and understand other groups. The Disney film *Pocahontas* was criticized for its rewriting of the European encounters with Native Americans. According to communication scholars Derek Buescher and Kent Ono (1996),

FIGURE 9-3 Concern about sports mascots centers on issues of how they are interpreted and how they create barriers to intercultural communication. This woman's concern that Indian mascots reflect racism is not always understood by sports fans. Although many people know that these mascots are offensive to some, what might drive people to resist changing sports mascots? How does this conflict demonstrate the diversity that resides within U.S. culture? (© *Steve Skjold/ PhotoEdit, Inc.*)

this film "helps audiences unlearn the infamous history of mass slaughter by replacing it with a cute, cuddly one" (p. 128).

Sometimes resistance is targeted at the profits of popular culture corporations. For example, in Iraq, many Iraqis buy pirated DVDs of U.S. films. These pirated DVDs are sold on the black market and the U.S. film corporations do not

POINT *of* VIEW

NIKE IN CHINA

Consider again the Nike ad covered in Chapter 1. To understand why the Chinese government and many Chinese people were upset by this advertisement, think about the history of European imperialism in China as one frame for understanding this controversy. If people are upset about an advertisement in the United States, how might they appeal to get an advertisement pulled?

> *China has banned a Nike television commercial showing U.S. basketball star LeBron James in a battle with an animated cartoon kung fu master, saying the ad insults Chinese national dignity.*
>
> *The commercial, titled Chamber of Fear, was broadcast on local Chinese stations and on state television's national sports channel before being pulled last month. It shows James, the Cleveland Cavaliers' reigning NBA rookie of the year, in a video game-style setting defeating the kung fu master, two women in traditional Chinese attire and a pair of dragons, considered a sacred symbol in traditional Chinese culture.*
>
> *The advertisement "violates regulations that mandate that all advertisements in China should uphold national dignity and interest and respect the motherland's culture," the State Administration for Radio, Film and Television said on a statement posted Monday on its Web site.*
>
> *"It also goes against the rules that require ads not to contain content that blasphemes national practices and cultures."*
>
> *The statement added: "The ad has received an indignant response from Chinese viewers."*

Source: From Audra Ang, "China Bans Nike Commercial," *Miami Herald*, December 7, 2004, p. 5C.

earn profits from these sales. One storeowner explains that: "The best-pirated movies come from Malaysia, says Milad Tareq, 21, who runs the Option CDs shop. Among the more popular movies in the Iraqi capital are those starring Robert DeNiro, Tom Hanks or Julia Roberts, he says" (Sabah, 2006). While this kind of resistance may be oriented toward the storeowner making a profit than undercutting the U.S. film corporations, these sales both spread U.S. popular culture, as well as hurt the potential profits of the filmmakers.

REPRESENTING CULTURAL GROUPS

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, people often are introduced to other cultures through the lens of popular culture. These introductions can be quite intimate, in ways that tourists may not experience. For example, movies may portray romance, familial conflict, or a death in the family; the audience experiences

STUDENT VOICES

A Belgian student describes his first impressions on arriving in the United States.

When I first landed at JFK Airport, I felt like I was going crazy. When I was younger, I only knew about America through television, radio, books, and movies. Even if people don't like America, it is still like a dream-land because it is a place where everything is big, where movies are made, especially police movies. American movies are very well made, with special effects, and so the first time I saw the real America, it was like in the movies. The police in the airport were like cowboys, wearing sunglasses, big mustaches, with badges everywhere and they were big and unafraid, like cowboys. You must respect the customs lines, and all the rules are very strict.

When we left the airport to go to Manhattan, we saw really poor neighborhoods near the airport. I wondered, is America really so poor with small houses? The houses look like they are made of wood and flimsy, unlike the brick ones in Belgium. Once you cross into Manhattan, however, you understand that in America you either have money or you don't. There are majestic cities and poverty; you can get lots of money or nothing. It is another way of living. In Belgium, you do not have to struggle so much for money. Once you have a job in Belgium, there are lots of job protections. In Belgium, if you want to live, you don't have to work.

— Christophe

the private lives of people they do not know, in ways that they never could simply as tourists.

Yet we must also think about how these cultural groups are portrayed through that lens of popular culture. Not everyone sees the portrayal in the same way. For example, you may not think that the TV shows *Desperate Housewives* and *Two and a Half Men* represent quintessential U.S. American values and lifestyles. But some viewers may see it as their entree into how U.S. Americans (or perhaps European Americans) live.

In a social science study on television coverage of affirmative action and African Americans, communication researchers Alexis Tan, Yuki Fujioka, and Gerdean Tan (2000) found that more negative coverage increased negative stereotypes about African Americans. However, they also found that "positive TV portrayals did not lead to positive stereotypes, nor did they influence opinions" (p. 370). They conclude that "negative portrayals are remembered more than positive portrayals, are more arousing and therefore are more influential in the development of stereotypes" (p. 370). Given this dynamic, it is clear how TV news coverage can continue to marginalize and reinforce negative stereotypes, even if the reports also present positive information about minority groups.

In a more recent social science study, Mary Beth Oliver and her colleagues (2004) examined news readers' memories of racial facial features of people

in the news. They presented one of four different kinds of news stories—nonstereotyped, stereotyped/noncrime, nonviolent crime, and violent crime—with the same photograph of the individual in the story. Participants were asked to recall this individual's facial features on a computer screen. They conclude, in part, that "[w]hen the stories pertained to crime, Afrocentric features were significantly more pronounced than the actual photograph depicted, whereas when the stories were unrelated to crime, the selected features did not differ significantly from the photograph actually seen" (p. 99). They suggest that certain topics might activate stereotypes and thus influence how these news stories are interpreted.

Migrants' Perceptions of Mainstream Culture

Ethnographers and other interpretive scholars have crossed international and cultural boundaries to examine the influence of popular culture. In an early study, Elihu Katz and Tamar Liebes (1987) set up focus groups to see how different cultural groups perceived the popular 1980s TV drama *Dallas:*

> *There were ten groups each of Israeli Arabs, new immigrants to Israel from Russia, first and second generation immigrants from Morocco, and kibbutz members. Taking these groups as a microcosm of the worldwide audience of* Dallas, *we are comparing their readings of the program with ten groups of matched Americans in Los Angeles. (p. 421)*

Katz and Liebes found that the U.S. Americans in Los Angeles were much less likely to perceive *Dallas* as portraying life in the United States. In contrast, the Israelis, Arabs, and immigrants were much more inclined to believe that this television show was indeed all about life in the United States. Katz and Liebes note, "What seems clear from the analysis, even at this stage, is that the non-Americans consider the story more real than the Americans. The non-Americans have little doubt that the story is about 'America'; the Americans are less sure" (p. 421). The results of this study are not surprising, but we should not overlook what they tell us about the intercultural communication process. We can see that these popular culture images are often more influential in constructing particular ways of understanding other cultural groups than our own.

Another study (Lee & Cho, 1990) that focused on immigrants to the United States yielded similar results. The researchers asked female Korean immigrants why they preferred watching Korean TV shows (which they had to rent at the video store) instead of U.S. programs. The respondents stated that, because of the cultural differences, the Korean shows were more appealing. Yet, as one respondent noted,

> *I like to watch American programs. Actors and actresses are glamorous and the pictures are sleek. But the ideas are still American. How many Korean women are that independent? And how many men commit incest? I think American*

> *programs are about American people. They are not the same as watching the Korean programs. But I watch them for fun. And I learn the American way of living by watching them. (p. 43)*

Here, both consumption of and resistance to U.S. television are evident. This woman uses U.S. television to learn about the U.S. American "way of living," but she prefers to watch Korean shows because they relate to her cultural identity. As she says, "I like the Korean programs because I get the sense of what's going on in my country" (p. 43).

The use of popular culture to learn about other cultures should not be surprising. After all, many teachers encourage their students to use popular culture in this manner, not only to improve their language skills but also to learn many of the nuances of another culture. When Tom was first studying French, his French professor told the students that *Le dernier métro* (*The Last Metro*), a film by director François Truffaut, was playing downtown. The point, of course, was to hear French spoken by natives. But Tom remembers being amazed at the subtle references to anti-Semitism, the treatment of lesbianism, and the film's style, which contrasted sharply with that of Hollywood films.

Popular Culture and Stereotyping

In what ways does reliance on popular culture create and reinforce stereotypes of different cultures? As we noted at the outset of this chapter, neither author has had the opportunity to travel all over the world. Our knowledge about other places, even places we have been, is largely influenced by popular culture. For people who do not travel and who interact in relatively homogeneous social circles, the impact of popular culture may be even greater.

Film studies scholar Richard Dyer (1993) tells us that

> *the effectiveness of stereotypes resides in the way they invoke a consensus. . . . The stereotype is taken to express a general agreement about a social group, as if that agreement arose before, and independently of, the stereotype. Yet for the most part it is from stereotypes that we get our ideas about social groups. (p. 14)*

Dyer makes an important observation that stereotypes are connected to social values and social judgments about other groups of people. These stereotypes are powerful because they function to tell us how "we" value and judge these other groups.

Many familiar stereotypes of ethnic groups are represented in the media. Scholar Lisa Flores (2000) describes the portrayal of a diverse group of high school students in the television show *Matt Waters*. Flores focuses her analysis on Angela, a Puerto Rican student. According to Flores, there is a strong theme of assimilation at work in this show. She notes,

> *to follow the seeming logic of this assimilationist politics requires an initial belief in the goal of a single, unified American culture expressed in a harmonious community such as that found within the* Matt Waters *community. The assimilationist*

STUDENT VOICES

I see plenty of ethnic groups on the television. Asians are portrayed as highly paid, intelligent, yet quiet individuals. Whites are portrayed mostly as middle to upper class individuals, also well paid. Most blacks and Hispanics are seen as criminal and poor, mostly on welfare. Arabs and other Middle Eastern peoples are seen as terrorists or in subservient roles, but almost always seen as outsiders. I think that urban Blacks as well as Asians are portrayed in the most fair light. While their portrayal might still be stereotypical, I think that it sums up what I see on a daily basis pretty accurately.

The portrayals of race and socioeconomic status on television seriously affects intercultural communication between members of other groups in a negative way. People internalize the stereotypical portrayals of these groups and communicate based on them, in ways that affect the feelings of other groups.

— Michael

perspective also mandates an assumption that ethnic minorities cannot maintain cultural difference except in rejection of all of dominant or mainstream society. (pp. 37–38)

She turns to Chicana feminism to show how we can resist these popular culture representations.

African American women also traditionally have been portrayed stereotypically on TV, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, when the roles they held were secondary (e.g., as domestics). Scholar Bishetta Merritt (2000) also reminds us of the African American female characters who often appear as background scenery: the person buying drugs, the homeless person on the sidewalk, the hotel lobby prostitute. Merritt points out that these women still project images, even if they aren't the focus:

If the majority of black women the television audience is exposed to are homeless, drug-addicted, or maids, and if viewers have no contact with African American women other than through television, what choice do they have but to believe that all women of this ethnic background reflect this television image? . . . It is, therefore, important, as the twenty-first century approaches and the population of this country includes more and more people of color, that the television industry broaden the images of African American women to include their nuances and diversity. (p. 53)

In her more recent study of local news coverage of Freaknik, an annual African American spring break event in Atlanta that ended in 2000, communication scholar Marian Meyers (2004) studied the ways that the violence perpetrated by African American men on African American women was represented. She found that the media coverage brought together issues of race, class, and gender and therefore tended to identify the perpetrators as nonstudent local troublemakers rather than as students. The news coverage also "minimizes the seriousness of the violence and

POINT *of* VIEW

This essay points out the problem of stereotypes perpetuated by the media.

WHAT'S AMERICAN?

Say the words "quintessentially American kid" to most anyone, and the image that comes to mind is one of a white American—blond-haired, blue-eyed, etc.

Why is it that an African-American kid is never referred to as a quintessentially American kid? Why not a Hispanic child, an Asian child or an Indian child? Are they not just as American? Part of the reason for the slight is that stereotyping is ages old, as compelling as it is devastating.

In the wake of the recent school shootings that have rocked America, the hypocrisy of stereotyping people reached another insulting crescendo. . . .

Kip Kinkel, the 15-year-old boy who allegedly killed his parents and two classmates in Oregon last month, was described in Newsweek *magazine as having "an innocent look that is part Huck Finn and part Alfred E. Newman—boyish and quintessentially American."*

You knew he was white. . . .

The New York Times *and* Newsweek *also described Kinkel with words such as "skinny," "slight," "diminutive," "freckle-faced," with an "innocent look." Luke Woodham, convicted recently in Mississippi of killing two students, was the "chubby, poor kid at Pearl High School who always seemed to get picked on." Mitchel Johnson and Andrew Golden, who allegedly killed four girls and a teacher in Jonesboro, Arkansas, were "little boys." Andrew Wurst, who allegedly killed a teacher in Edinboro, Pennsylvania, was a "shy and quirky eighth grader with an offbeat sense of humor." . . .*

When's the last time a black child who allegedly committed a comparable crime was described in such wholesome detail, instead of as cold or adultlike?

The danger in such description is that black children are demonized in people's minds, making it easier to dismiss their humanity and easier to mete out more harsh and unfair judgments and punishment than whites receive.

Source: From "What's American? When Is the Last Time You Heard a Young Black Suspect Described as 'Innocent-Looking' or 'Shy'?" *The Post Standard*, July 3, 1998, p. A6.

portrays its victims primarily as stereotypic Jezebels who provoke male violence through their own behavior" (p. 96). The continued use of this sexualized stereotype for African American women displaces responsibility for what happened from the male perpetrators to the women who were attacked.

What about those ethnic groups that simply don't appear except as infrequent stereotypes—for example, Native Americans and Asian Americans? How do these stereotypes influence intercultural interaction? Do people behave any differently if they don't hold stereotypes about people with whom they are interacting? Two communication researchers, Valerie Manusov and Radha Hegde

POINT *of* VIEW

In celebration of Black History Month *Time* magazine chronicled the most important movies that dealt with race. This excerpt is important, but how would a similar piece on Asian or Latin cinema read?

> *Look around, and you'll see how African Americans have emerged as the big screen's most reliable stars. Will Smith is the one demonstrable megastar. Morgan Freeman's quiet dignity gets him designated as the face of God and the soul of humanity. And the achievements of blacks are regularly honored by Hollywood. In the past seven years, blacks have won Academy Awards in every acting category. Halle Berry took Best Actress for* Monster's Ball, *Freeman Best Supporting Actor for* Million Dollar Baby, *Jennifer Hudson Best Supporting Actress for* Dreamgirls. *In Best Actor, three of the last six Oscars have gone to African Americans: Denzel Washington for* Training Day, *Jamie Foxx for* Ray *and Forest Whitaker for* The Last King of Scotland. *In these glamorous categories, blacks have achieved a kind of parity. Hmmm, that didn't take long — only* 100 years.
>
> *To celebrate Black History Month, we've chosen 25 movies to honor the artistry, appeal and determination of African Americans on and behind the screen. The films span nine decades, and reveal a legacy that was tragic before it was triumphant. At first, blacks were invisible; when they were allowed to be seen, it was mostly as derisive comic relief. The 1950s ushered in the age of the noble Negro, in the imposing person of Sidney Poitier — the Jackie Robinson of movies. Only when Hollywood realized that a sizable black audience would pay to see films more reflective of their lives, whether funny, poignant or violent, were they given control of the means of production.*

Source: From "Hollywood on Race" (2008), *Time*. Retrieved on May 15, 2008 from http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1709148_1709143,00.html

(1993), investigated these questions in a study in which they identified two groups of college students: those who had some preconceived ideas about India (which were fairly positive) and those who didn't. Manusov and Hegde asked all of the students to interact, one at a time, with an international student from India who was part of the study.

When the students with preconceptions talked with the Indian student, they interacted differently from those who had no expectations. Specifically, students from the former group relied less on small talk, covered more topics, and asked fewer questions within each topic. Overall, their conversations were more like those between people who know each other. The students with the preconceptions also were more positive about the conversation.

What can we learn from this study? Having some information and positive expectations may lead to more in-depth conversations and positive outcomes than having no information. But what happens when negative stereotypes are present? It is possible that expectations are fulfilled in this case too.

For example, in several studies at Princeton University, whites interviewed both white and black "job applicants" who were actually part of the study and were trained to behave consistently, no matter how interviewers acted toward them. The interviews were videotaped. The interviewers clearly behaved differently toward blacks: Their speech deteriorated, they made more grammatical errors, they spent less time, and they showed fewer "immediacy" behaviors—that is, they were less friendly and less outgoing. In a second study, interviewers were trained to be either "immediate" or "nonimmediate" as they interviewed white job applicants. A panel of judges watched the videotapes and agreed that those applicants interviewed by the "nonimmediate" interviewer performed less well and were more nervous. This suggests that the African American applicants in the first study never had a chance: They were only reacting to the nonimmediate behavior of the interviewers. Mark Snyder (1998) summarizes: "Considered together, the two investigations suggest that in interracial encounters, racial stereotypes may constrain behavior in ways to cause both blacks and whites to behave in accordance with those stereotypes" (p. 455).

U.S. POPULAR CULTURE AND POWER

One of the dynamics of intercultural communication that we have highlighted throughout this text is power. In considering popular culture, we need to think about not only how people interpret and consume popular culture but also how these popular culture texts represent particular groups in specific ways. If people largely view other cultural groups through the lens of popular culture, then we need to think about the power relations that are embedded in these popular culture dynamics.

Global Circulation of Images and Commodities

As noted previously, much of the internationally circulated popular culture is U.S. popular culture. U.S.-made films, for example, are widely distributed by an industry that is backed by considerable financial resources. Some media scholars have noted that the U.S. film industry earns far more money outside the United States than from domestic box office receipts (Guback, 1969; Guback & Varis, 1982). This situation ensures that Hollywood will continue to seek overseas markets and that it will have the financial resources to do so. The film *Spider-Man* exemplifies this economic position of Hollywood. Although the producers and distributors certainly made a considerable amount of money from the domestic screenings, they earned significant amounts of money from non-U.S. showings as well. (See Figure 9-4.)

Many other U.S. media are widely available outside the United States, including television and newspapers. For example, MTV and CNN are broadcast internationally. And the *International Herald Tribune*, published jointly by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, is widely available in some parts of

FIGURE 9-4 James Dean remains a popular cultural icon in the United States and abroad. This 1996 photo shows that one of his films, *East of Eden,* continues to play in Tokyo. How does Dean's popularity in Japan contrast with the absence of a similarly popular Japanese male star in the United States? What might explain this disparity? Think about the issues of cultural imperialism raised in this chapter. (*Courtesy T. K. Nakayama*)

the world. The implications of the dominance by U.S. media and popular culture have yet to be determined, although you might imagine the consequences. India produces more films than the United States but makes less money in box office receipts. (See "Point of View" box on page 372.)

Not all popular culture comes from the United States. For example, James Bond is a British phenomenon, but the famous character has been exported to the United States. In their study of the popularity of the Bond series, scholars Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott (1987) note that in the Bond film *A License to Kill* "the threat to the dominance of white American male culture is removed not by a representative of that culture, and certainly not by a somewhat foppish English spy, but by the self-destruction of the forces ranged against it" (pp. 293–294). Here, a British character becomes a hero for U.S. and international audiences through the U.S. film industry. It is not always easy to know what is and what is not U.S. popular culture.

Recently, the *Korean Wave* (*Hallyu*) has demonstrated the profitability of South Korean popular culture. This popular culture phenomenon has "become a rallying cry within Korea for the perceived success of its cultural industries in Asia" (J. Kim, 2007, p. 48). *The Korea Times* reports that "according to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, the nation exported about $1.4 billion

STUDENT VOICES

Ethnic groups are starting to be portrayed a lot in television shows. I think that is due to the diversity of different cultures in different societies. However, the ethnic groups are not shown in any major roles. Most of the roles that they tend to occupy are ones of lower class or the poor. It is very rare to see a person of a different race in a very high position in television shows. However, that is starting to become common now as compared to before. To me, I think that people of Asian descent are shown as having a lot of different roles on TV. I personally do not think that the way media or television portrays different ethnic groups has any sort of effect on the way they are treated.

— Sadaf

I think for the most part, the lower class isn't even represented on TV. Yet when they are, its usually in a negative light. They are criminals or drug addicts on Law and Order. *My favorite show,* Sex and the City, *never even shows a person who doesn't wear designer clothes or is a politician. I think it's sad and is a misrepresentation of the real world. I guess that's why we like to watch it!*

— Alexia

worth of entertainment products last year" (Kim, 2008). While primarily popular in Asia, *Hallyu* has even made the city of Chuncheon a popular tourist destination, as the local drama "Winter Sonata" (2002) gained popularity abroad (S.-Y. Kim, 2008).

Key to this South Korean phenomenon, however, is the global circulation of popular culture. Thus, "Hallyu is a term that can *only* be applied to a cultural product once it has been exposed to foreign audiences. In other words, not every Korean drama, film or pop song, no matter how popular in Korea, will be labeled Hallyu—only those that have been exported and done so successfully" (J. Kim, 2007, pp. 49–50). The focus of *Hallyu*, however, is on "Asian rather than global domination" (p. 55). In any case, the international circulation of Korean popular culture has important implications for the production of Asian standards of beauty and relationships, as well as international trade.

Much popular culture that is expressed in non-English languages has a difficult time on the global scene. Although Céline Dion, who sings in English, has been able to reach a worldwide audience, a fellow French Canadian, Garou, who sings in French, has not reached the same level of notoriety. Still, Garou (Pierre Garand) is extremely popular in the francophone world. Have you ever heard of Garou? To reach a worldwide audience, must he sing in English? Garou released his next CD, *Reviens*, in 2003 and decided that because of "the generosity of his French-speaking public . . . [the album] would be written and sung in French" (www.garouland.com/Reviens/english/bio_08.html). What does this tell us about popular culture? What does it tell us about the unequal power relations that are evident in popular culture? How does it influence how we think about the world?

TABLE 9-2 U.S. POPULAR CULTURE IS PROFITABLE INTERNATIONALLY. SOME PLACES ENJOY CONSUMING U.S. PRODUCTS WHILE OTHERS RESIST THESE PRODUCTS.

United States International Pop Culture Influence

Product	Destination	Impact
Titanic (film)	Worldwide	*Titanic* was a huge success in the United States, but over 2/3 of its eventual 1.8 billion dollar gross was acquired overseas (boxofficemojo).
A.L.F. (television show)	Russia	*A.L.F.* was a mildly popular situation comedy featuring an alien (hand-puppet) who lived with a suburban family. The show is hugely popular in Russia (Havens, 2002).
The film industry	Iran	Iran's fledgling film industry has been sheltered by a protective government unwilling to air many American films. There is broad concern that American films will "overwhelm" Iranian industry and "debase" the moral foundations of the nation. As a result, many popular international films are simply unavailable in Iran (Crothers, 2007).

Sources: All time international box office. Retrieved on May 15, 2008 from http://www.boxofficemojo.com/alltime/world/; Timothy Havens, (2002). "It's Still a White World Out There": The Interplay of Culture and Economics in International Television Trade, *Critical Studies in Media Communication,* 19: 377–397; Lane Crothers, *Globalization and American Popular Culture.* Plymouth U.K.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007.

Cultural Imperialism

It is difficult to measure the impact of the U.S. and Western media and popular culture on the rest of the world, but we do know that we cannot ignore this dynamic. The U.S. government in the 1920s believed that having U.S. movies on foreign screens would boost the sales of U.S. products because the productions would be furnished with U.S. goods. The government thus worked closely with the Hays Office (officially, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America) to break into foreign markets, most notably in the United Kingdom (Nakayama & Vachon, 1991).

media imperialism
Domination or control through media.

electronic colonialism
Domination or exploitation utilizing technological forms.

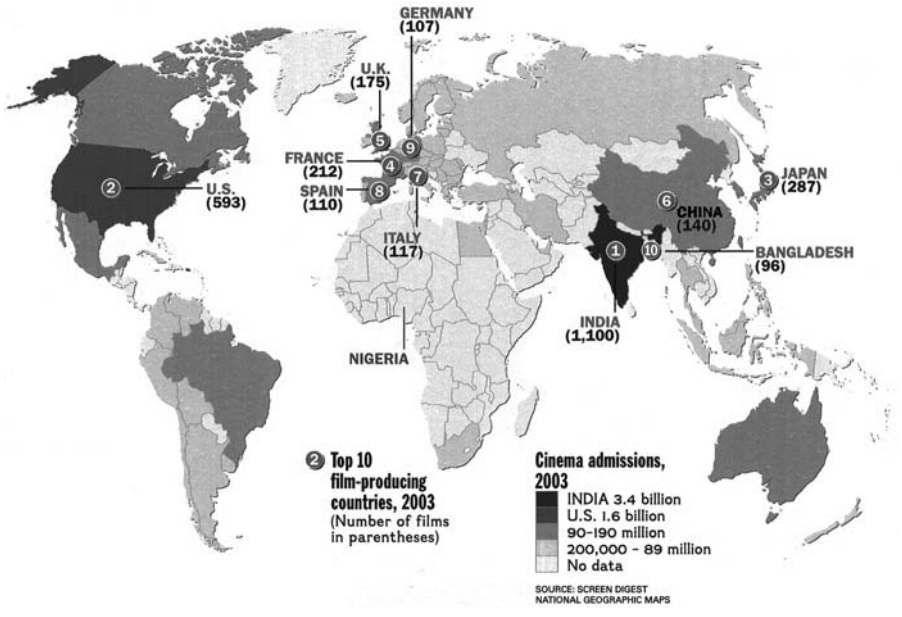
cultural imperialism
Domination through the spread of cultural products.

Discussions about **media imperialism, electronic colonialism,** and **cultural imperialism,** which began in the 1920s, continue today. The interrelationships among economics, nationalism, and culture make it difficult to determine with much certainty how significant cultural imperialism might be. The issue of cultural imperialism is complex because the definition is complex. In his survey of the cultural imperialism debates, scholar John Tomlinson (1991) identifies

FIGURE 9-5 South Korean actor Bae Yong Joon is shown arriving at the Tokyo airport with thousands of fans awaiting his arrival. He is a very popular television drama star who is part of the Korean Wave. The Korean Wave highlights how non-U.S. popular culture can circulate and become very marketable in other parts of the world. (© *Katsumi Kasahara/AP Images*)

five ways of thinking about cultural imperialism: (1) as cultural domination, (2) as media imperialism, (3) as nationalist discourse, (4) as a critique of global capitalism, and (5) as a critique of modernity (pp. 19–23). Tomlinson's analysis underscores the interrelatedness of issues of ethnicity, culture, and nationalism in the context of economics, technology, and capitalism—resources that are distributed unevenly throughout the world. To understand the concerns about cultural imperialism, therefore, it is necessary to consider the complexity of the impact of U.S. popular culture. (See Table 9-2.) There is no easy way to measure the impact of popular culture, but we should be sensitive to its influences on intercultural communication. Let's look at some examples.

Some governments have become concerned about the amount of popular culture coming into their countries. The French government, for example, has expressed dismay about the domination of the English-language broadcasting of CNN because it feels it projects a view of the world it does not share. In order to challenge this view, the French are launching their own international broadcasting network to present their views on the world. Although informally referred to as "CNN à la française," this new "channel would promote a vision of a 'multipolar' world that is not dominated by one superpower, such as the United States" (Louet, 2005). This new channel will not initially be available in the United States, but it hopes to expand from Europe, Africa, and the Middle



THE REEL WORLD

Nigerians don't go to the movies; the movies come to them. With few operating cinemas in Nigeria's largest city of Lagos, screenings often occur in local restaurants and private homes; videos are sold at market stands and sometimes hawked to motorists caught in traffic. This distribution of films from "Nollywood," as the country's ultralow-budget industry is known, may seem unusual, but it still satisfies the demand for movies—an obsession shared by people around the world.

In 2003, according to film industry source *Screen Digest*, some seven billion movie tickets were sold worldwide, earning an estimated 22 billion dollars. The greatest share of these global box-office receipts—more than 43 percent—came from U.S. theaters. Japanese theaters charged the most for tickets: Reserved seats can cost up to $25. Though India made more films than Hollywood, it

East to Asia, South America, and the United States later. This will allow the French to compete with CNN, the BBC, and A1 Jazeera as international broadcasting networks.

In a study on this tension between global networks and local networks, Jonathan Cohen (2005) examined the situation in Israel. He looked at Israel's 99 channels and identified six different ways that these channels function in the global and local environment. He then noted, "Foreign television is often thought to be harmful because it separates people from their national communities"

(© *William Albert Allard/National Geographic Image Collection*)

made less money from them; the price of admission to an Indian theater averaged just 20 cents.

Many American blockbusters rake in more money internationally than at home. *Titanic*, the highest grossing film of all time, made two-thirds of its 1.8-billion-dollar take overseas. American movies have long been retooled for foreign sale. In the 1930s stars such as the comedy team Laurel and Hardy reshot their films in German and other languages—coached with phonetically spelled cue cards. Now native speakers are recorded over original actors' voices with varying success. In the French version of *Star Wars*, the villain's voice is considerably less menacing, and his name's been changed to Dark Vador.

American movies may be popular abroad, but foreign concession stands still cater to local tastes. Some European audiences wash their popcorn down with beer. In China the popcorn's sweetened. Other film snack favorites there—spicy cabbage, salted plums, dried squid shreds—have a flavor all their own.

Source: From Scott Elder, "The Reel World," Geographica, *National Geographic*, March 2005.

(p. 451),but he warned that we should not so easily view foreign television in this way. He doesn't think it is yet clear that watching U.S. television shows "like *Sex and the City* or *The Apprentice* weakens viewers' connections to Israeli culture or strengthens them by providing a stark contrast to viewers' lives" (p. 451). Think back to Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding model. Cohen is emphasizing that we cannot assume people who watch certain shows will decode them in any particular way. The influence of media is more complex than a simple imposition of meaning from abroad.

Sometimes the Western images are imported and welcomed by the ruling interests in other countries. For example, the government of the Ivory Coast in West Africa has used foreign (mostly French) media to promote its image of a

STUDENT VOICES

Some people seek out foreign films; others avoid them. In choosing either response to foreign films, are you choosing films based on the narrative or the subtitles?

I do not like foreign films because I have a hard time understanding what is going on even with the subtitles. I can't understand a lot of the humor in foreign movies. I also don't think that all languages translate to English exactly, and it makes it hard to understand these movies.
—Elizabeth

Foreign films seem to paint a picture that rings more true to me than Hollywood films. In Hollywood films, there seems to be recurring themes: the strong man, the materialistic woman, heterosexuality, white stars with a token minority. They seldom get a role free of the most ridiculous stereotypes. The foreign independent films seem to have more diversity, more balance, a better depiction of the world.
— Sam

"new" Ivoirien cultural identity. The government purchased a satellite dish that permits 1,400 hours of French programming annually, which represents 77% of all programming. But it has been criticized by many for borrowing heavily from the Western media—for inviting cultural imperialism:

> *While television, as mirror, sometimes reflects multiple Ivoirien cultures, the latter are expected to acquiesce to a singular national culture in the image of the Party, which is also synonymous with a Western cultural image. . . . The cultural priority is openness for the sake of modernization in the quest of the Ivoirien national identity. (Land, 1992, p. 25)*

In another take on globalization, communication scholar Radhika Parameswaran (2004) undertook a textual analysis of Indian newspaper and magazine coverage of India's six Miss Universe and Miss World titleholders. In the context of a global economy, these women are upheld as role models who are ordinary women who worked hard to become a beauty queen while maintaining their national identities. Noting that "the therapeutic vocabulary of the beauty queen as role model, a recent construct of liberal individualism in South Asia, induces amnesia and insulates middle class citizens from the contradictions that such individualized discourses of empowerment can conceal. . . . [G]lobalization's ideologies of prosperity in India offer no recourse for the vast majority of poor citizens to attain even the humble ordinariness of the middle class consumer who desires the status of the global beauty queen" (p. 367). By asking what social functions these narratives serve, this critical study argues that they serve the more elite segments of society in India.

In all of these examples, popular culture plays an enormous role in explaining relations around the globe. It is through popular culture that we try to understand the dynamics of other cultures and nations. Although these representations are problematic, we also rely on popular culture to understand many kinds of issues: the conflict in Kashmir between India and Pakistan, the sex abuse scandals in the Catholic Church, the conflict in the West Bank between Israelis and Palestinians, and global warming. For many of us, the world exists through popular culture.

INTERNET RESOURCES

www.racialicious.com/
This Web site is a privately run blog pertaining to the intersections of race and popular culture. The blog contributors compile a diverse array of information about music, television, film, print media, and other pop culture outlets. Most blog entries engage in some sort of analysis of the merits of or story surrounding a particular cultural artifact. Along with written resources, this blog contains www.Youtube.com entries as well.

www.npr.org/templates/topics/topic.php?topicId=1048
National Public Radio hosts a Web page devoted to identifying and commenting on popular culture trends. This resource is not specifically about intercultural issues, but these issues are covered. The Web site is a good mix of information and political commentary for students doing research on emerging popular culture issues.

www.uiowa.edu/~commstud/resources/POP-Culture.html
The well-respected communication department at the University of Iowa has compiled a wonderful resource for students doing popular culture research. This Web site lists and direct links to hundreds of communication-oriented articles on pop culture subjects ranging from Bazooka Joe to Madonna. The articles are categorized and easily accessible.

www.wsu.edu/~amerstu/pop/race.html#articles
Washington State University hosts this Web resource. This Web site is a compilation of academic and popular press articles related to the intersection of popular culture and race. It contains direct links to articles, a directory of other Web sites, and a useful bibliography.

www.mediaed.org/videos/MediaRaceAndRepresentation/CulturalCriticismandTransformation/#
This is the Web resource for the bell hooks video on *Cultural Criticism and Transformation*, a 1997 edited interview with cultural critic bell hooks. The video is not available in its full form online (though sections are available on www.Youtube.com/), but this site does contain related articles and a section for comments.

SUMMARY

- We learn about other cultures through popular culture.
- Popular culture is popular because of its wide dissemination and easy access to many people.
- Popular culture is produced by culture industries, is not folk culture, is ubiquitous, and serves social functions.
- Popular culture can serve as a public forum.
- Cultural texts are not the same as cultural identities.
- People can seek out or resist popular culture.
- Cultural groups are often represented in ways that can play into stereotypes.
- Migrants can learn about other cultures through popular culture.
- The United States still dominates global production of popular culture, but other nations produce significant amounts that are important locally.
- Concerns about cultural imperialism need to be considered.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do people select some popular culture forms over others?
2. How do the choices you make about what forms of popular culture to consume influence the formation of your cultural identity?
3. What factors influence culture industries to portray cultural groups as they do?
4. How does the portrayal of different cultural groups by the media influence intercultural interactions with those groups?
5. What stereotypes are perpetuated by U.S. popular culture and exported to other countries?
6. How do our social roles affect our consumption of popular culture?
7. What strategies can people apply to resist popular culture?

Go to the self-quizzes on the Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/martinnakayama5 to further test your knowledge.

ACTIVITIES

1. *Popular Culture.* Meet with other students in small groups and answer the following questions:
   a. Which popular culture texts (magazines, TV shows, and so on) do you watch or buy? Why?

b. Which popular culture texts do you choose *not* to buy or watch? Which do you *not* like? Why?

c. Think about and discuss why people like some products compared to others. (For example, do they support our worldview and assumptions?)

2. *Ethnic Representation in Popular Culture*. For a week, keep a log of the TV shows you watch. Record the following information for each show and discuss in small groups:

a. How many different ethnic groups were portrayed in this show?

b. What roles did these ethnic groups have in the show?

c. What ethnic groups were represented in the major roles?

d. What ethnic groups were represented in the minor roles?

e. What ethnic groups were represented in the good-guy roles?

f. What ethnic groups were represented in the bad-guy roles?

g. What types of roles did women have in the show?

h. What intercultural interaction occurred in the show?

i. What was the outcome of the interaction?

j. How do the roles and interactions support or refute common stereotypes of the ethnic groups involved?

KEY WORDS

cultural imperialism (370)
cultural texts (354)
culture industries (351)
decoding (354)
electronic colonialism (370)
encoding (354)
folk culture (351)
media imperialism (370)
popular culture (350)
reader profiles (355)

The Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/martinnakayama5 features flashcards and crossword puzzles based on these terms and concepts.

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