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The Concept of Intercultural Communication and the Cosmopolitan Leader

The various cultures of the world are far more accessible than ever before, and people are more mobile and more likely to traverse into cultures different than their own. In the past, most people were born, lived, and died within a very limited geographical area; this is no longer the case. A visit to any major city such as Vancouver, New York, Mexico City, London, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Singapore, or Tokyo, with its multicultural population, demonstrates that the movement of people from one country and culture to another has become commonplace and that business is an international affair.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide conceptual tools needed to understand culture, communication, and cosmopolitan leadership in a world economy. The chapter explores varying approaches to culture and explains how culture and communication are intertwined in the process of communicating with people from different cultures. It also examines some barriers to intercultural communication and identifies the essential characteristics cosmopolitan leaders need to effectively cope with an emerging world culture and to compete in an international arena. Such knowledge is necessary if we are to fully understand the complex nature of intercultural communication and hope to comprehend the essential interface between international commerce, culture, communication, synergy, and the global organization.

Chapter 2

Defining Culture and Cultural Patterns

What is culture? 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). Edward T. Hall (1959), a pioneer in the study of culture and intercultural communication, observes that much of the difficulty is that "culture controls behavior in deep and persisting ways, many of which are outside of awareness and therefore beyond conscious control of the individual" (p. 35). Perhaps the song "Tradition" from the musical *Fiddler on the Roof* best extols the intricate composition of culture: "Because of our traditions, we keep our sanity . . . Tradition tells us how to sleep, how to work, how to wear clothes . . . How did it get started? I don't know—it's tradition . . . Because of our traditions, everyone knows who he is and what God expects of him." Traditions express a particular culture, provide people with a mindset, and give them a sense of belonging and uniqueness. As Hall (1976) notes, "Culture is man's medium; there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture" (p. 16). Therefore, it can be valuable to explore how others have defined this medium and related terms.

CULTURE AND RELATED TERMS

A primary characteristic distinguishing humans from other animals is our development of culture, which many think of as a place—the South American culture of Brazil, the Western European culture of France, the Middle East culture of Saudi Arabia, and the Far East culture of China. Culture may certainly include geography as well as material objects and artifacts (Herskovits, 1955) but Clifford Geertz (1973) perceives culture more importantly to be the means by which people "communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life. Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action" (p. 24). Keesing (1974) suggests that our cultures provide us with "internal models of reality" (p. 89) and implicit theories of the "games being played" in our societies, whereas Olsen (1978) points out that "as people communicate the meanings of their actions to each other and work out shared interpretations of activities and definitions of situations, they develop a common culture that is shared by the participants . . . providing them with interpretations of social life, role expectations, common definitions of situations, and social norms" (p. 107). We are not born with the genetic imprint of a particular culture, but rather learn about our culture through interactions with parents, extended family members, friends, teachers, and others who are part of the culture. Moreover, television and other electronic media convey many of the day-to-day

norms and expectations of our culture (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980). The mutually shared beliefs, values, and norms that characterize culture give each of us guidelines about what things mean, what is important, and what should be done. Philip Harris and Robert Moran (1991) observe that "culture gives people a sense of who they are, of belonging, of how they should behave, and what they should be doing" (p. 12). Consequently, "culture is not one thing, but many" (Hall, 1959, p. 169). Culture is the luggage we carry with us in our daily lives and when we travel abroad. It is a set of objective and subjective elements that shape perception and define our worldview.

Besides culture, there are other related terms that require definition if we are to properly put in perspective the relationship between culture and international business. These terms are often used interchangeably with culture or referred to in conjunction with culture—nation, ethnicity, race, subculture, counterculture, enculturation, acculturation, and popular culture.

- *Nation* is a political term referring to the formal governmental and legal apparatus that structurally binds a geographic region together (e.g., the United States, Mexico, France, Egypt, or Japan) and regulates how leaders are selected, the way diplomatic relations are conducted, and what social, political, economic, and educational institutions should do to serve the greater community.

- *Ethnic group* refers to a wide variety of groups who might share a language, historical origin, religion, or home culture (e.g., African Americans, Irish Americans, Asian Americans, Polish Americans, Italian Americans, or Mexican Americans).

- *Race,* although biological in nature, is more a political and legal construction referring to certain physical similarities (e.g., skin color or eye shape) that are shared by a group of people and used to justify economic and social distinctions.

- *Subcultures* or *co-cultures* are groups of people compatibly co-existing within a larger culture, yet possessing a conscious identity that distinguishes them from others within the larger society. Subculture or co-culture is often used to refer to ethnic and racial groups that share both a common national boundary with the larger collectivity as well as many of the other aspects of the prevailing macroculture. However, we can also identify and talk about other types of subcultures or co-cultures that share many common cultural ideas with the larger culture while still possessing some that are unique (e.g., an urban subculture, homeless subculture, rural subculture, family subculture, legal subculture, or

business/organizational subculture). These subcultures of identification are often defined by class, education, age, religion, wealth, residence, work, family, or gender and assume significance depending upon their saliency for any particular individual.

• *Countercultures* are groups that engage in behavior that is distinctively different from and in opposition to that of the dominant culture. Members of these groups not only reject the values of the larger culture but also actively confront society and work against the traditionally recognized values (e.g., organized crime and drug dealers).

• *Enculturation* is the socialization process we go through to adapt to our larger society.

• *Acculturation* is the process of adjusting and adapting to a new and different culture.

• *Popular culture* refers to those "systems or artifacts that most people share and that most people know about" such as television, music, videos, and popular books or magazines (Brummett, 1994, p. 21). Popular culture is ubiquitous and distinct from folk culture. It is produced by culture industries and bears the "interests of the people" so it serves a variety of social functions (Fiske, 1989, p. 23). Popular culture may transmit values, may serve to entertain, and is a frequent forum for the development of our ideas about other people and places. We may choose, however, to consume or resist the messages of popular culture. A great deal of popular culture is produced in the United States and circulated, raising concerns from other countries about "cultural imperialism."

LEVELS OF CULTURE

Culture is often compared to an iceberg—much of it lies beneath the surface, out of our immediate awareness. We generally respond to the surface values that we can sense; however, to truly understand a culture, we must also explore the behaviors below the waterline. This is a useful metaphor for examining the technical, formal, and informal levels of culture (Hall, 1959):

• The *technical level* is the explicitly clear and visible portion of our cultural iceberg and includes the artistic, technological, and materialistic components of a culture as well as its institutional systems. We generally find the fewest intercultural misunderstandings or problems at this level. Still, changes at this level can dramatically alter the balance of forces that maintain a culture. For example, the introduction of snowmobiles into the nomadic

reindeer herding tribes of Greenland transformed some small family enterprises into large business conglomerates that monopolized the herding activity and dispossessed other tribal members.

• The *formal level* of our cultural iceberg rests at sea level, partially above and slightly below the surface. The formal level includes the norms, rules, roles, traditions, rituals, customs, and communication patterns of a group. Norms provide a guide for how group members *should* behave, and rules clarify what is mutually considered "right" and "wrong" by a group. Roles define and explain expected or actual performance in relationships or social situations, whereas traditions, rituals, and customs describe regular practices within a culture. The communication patterns of a group denote how members communicate with others as well as their associations— who communicates with whom about what.

• The *informal level* of our cultural iceberg extends far below sea level and includes the cultural history and core values and beliefs that shape a culture's worldview and influence cultural identity. Cultural history, or the origin and background of a culture, can generate insight into the norms of a group and assist us in understanding a culture's identity. Cultural identity is our sense of who we think we are, and because we participate in many cultural systems and belong to various groups, we develop multiple identities that come into play at different times depending on the circumstances and context (e.g., gender identity, age identity, racial identity, ethnic identity, religious identity, class identity, national identity, regional identity, personal identity). Cultural identities commonly emerge through daily social practices (Carbaugh, 1990; Collier, 1998; Collier & Thomas, 1988) and reflect the values and worldview of the culture. Values form the core of a culture and convey what is good and bad as well as express what is proper and improper or what is normal and abnormal behavior (Feather, 1990, 1995). A culture's worldview is its "set of more or less systematized beliefs and values in terms of which [it] evaluates and attaches meaning to the reality that surrounds it" (Kraft, 1978, p. 407).

Worldviews are unconsciously accepted as the way things are.

A knowledge of these cultural levels can help us identify the principal elements and coordinating systems composing a culture as well as recognize its salient features. Understanding these various levels can also alert us to the dominant norms, rules, and values inherent in the culture and assist us in determining the *structural tightness* of the culture. In "tight" cultures, the norms and rules of the culture tend to be clear, whereas in "loose" cultures, the norms and rules are more ambiguous, permitting greater deviation and more flexibility

(Pelto, 1968). Cultural homogeneity tends to contribute to cultural tightness, whereas cultural heterogeneity tends to lead to cultural looseness because the differences among group members make it difficult to agree on what behavior is correct in a particular situation. The degree to which there is a need for coordinated action also influences the degree of structural tightness. The greater the need for coordinated action, the tighter the culture; the less the need for coordinated action, the looser the culture (Triandis, 1994). Japan is an example of a tight culture, and the United States is an example of a loose culture.

International business seeks to create a "single marketplace," so understanding the way people live will be important because, when operating beyond our own borders, the best strategies and plans can easily go astray if one ignores the cultural differences and fails to recognize and grasp opportunities for cultural synergy. Moreover, multinational organizations and world corporations will have to be well enculturated, understanding their own cultural, business, and organizational values, and capable of adapting and seeking a collaborative working relationship with the world as a whole (Terpstra & David, 1985). This means, in the language of Edward T. Hall (1976), "that if one is to prosper in this new world without being unexpectedly battered, one must transcend one's own system" (p. 51). To do so entails acknowledging cultural alternatives, exploring the multiple levels of these cultures, and identifying their elements, characteristics, and coordinating institutional systems. Therefore, a familiarization with the different approaches researchers have taken toward culture can be helpful in understanding the fundamental constructs of cultures.

APPROACHES TO CULTURE

The approaches to culture and conceptual taxonomies presented here provide frames of reference that allow us to use culture-specific knowledge to improve our intercultural awareness and competence. As you study these approaches to cultural patterns, we encourage you to keep in mind that individual members of a culture may vary greatly from the pattern that is typical of that culture. Martin and Nakayama (2001) note that an underlying problem with cultural taxonomies is the tendency to "essentialize" people. In other words, "people tend to assume that a particular group characteristic is the essential characteristic of given group members at all times and in all contexts . . . this ignores the heterogeneity within any population . . . [or] the contexts when interacting" (p. 36).

Hall's Low- and High-Context Cultures

Hall (1976) contends that cultures differ on a continuum that ranges from low to high context. Information and rules are explicit in low-context cultures that

use linear logic and a direct style of communication. In contrast, information and rules are implicit in high-context cultures that draw upon intuition and utilize an indirect style of communication. People using high-context communication tend to be extremely reserved, with much more being taken for granted and assumed to be shared, thus permitting an emphasis on understatement and nonverbal codes (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988).

Hall (1976) notes that in high-context cultures, the commitment between people is very strong and responsibility to others takes precedence over responsibility to oneself. In low-context cultures, the emphasis is placed on the individual, with the bonds between people being more tenuous and the extent of involvement and commitment to long-term relationships being lower. Thus, in high-context cultures meaning is couched in the nature of situations and relationships are very important, whereas in low-context cultures meaning is explicit and dependent on verbal codes and group memberships change rapidly with individualism being valued. Examples of high-context cultures include Asian, Latin American, and African countries, whereas low-context cultures include the United States and Western European countries.

Hofstede's Dimensions of Cultural Variability

Geert Hofstede's (1979, 1980, 1983, 1991, 2001) studies of cultural differences in value orientations offer another approach to understanding the range of cultural differences. Using empirical methods of analysis, Hofstede initially developed four dimensions of cultural variability that he labeled individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. Subsequent research extended his investigations and theorizing to incorporate time orientation as a dimension along which cultures can be ordered (see McSweeney, 2005, for a country-by-country breakdown of the dimensions):

- The *individualism-collectivism* dimension assesses a culture's tendency to encourage people to be unique and independent or conforming and interdependent. In individualistic cultures, the autonomy of the individual is paramount, with personal motivation and personal goals taking precedence over group or collective concerns and interests. Decisions are based on what is good or desirable for the individual rather than the collectivity. Collectivistic cultures require an absolute loyalty to the group, and groups to which a person belongs are the most important social units. Decisions that juxtapose the benefits to the individual and the benefits to the group are always based on what is best for the group. In turn, the group is expected to look out for and take care of its individual members. Members of collectivistic cultures also rank-order the importance of their group

memberships—the company is often considered the primary group in Japan, whereas the family is the primary group in Latin America and the community is the primary group in most of Africa. Collectivistic cultures clearly distinguish between those who are members of their group and those who are not, whereas members of individualistic cultures do not create a large chasm between in-group and out-group members, applying the same standards to all people and permitting greater possibilities for connecting and becoming involved (Kim, 1995). Thus, the emphasis in individualistic cultures is on individual initiative and achievement, whereas the emphasis in collectivistic societies is on fitting in or belonging. A number of scholars and researchers believe that the individualism-collectivism dimension is the most important attribute that distinguishes one culture from another (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003; Hui & Triandis, 1986; Triandis, 1972, 1984, 1988, 1990, 1995).

• The *masculinity-femininity* dimension refers to the degree to which gender-specific roles are valued and the degree to which a cultural group values "masculine" (achievement, ambition, acquisition of material goods) or "feminine" (quality of life, service to others, nurturance) values. Cultural systems high in masculinity clearly distinguish between social gender roles (e.g., men are supposed to be assertive and focused on professional success whereas women are supposed to be modest, tender, and caring) and emphasize achievement, personal wealth, and ambition. Cultures high in femininity prefer equality between the sexes and less prescriptive role behaviors associated with gender roles, valuing service to others and quality of life (Hofstede, 1998). The United States, Austria, Italy, Japan, and Mexico score high on the masculinity index, viewing work, recognition, and advancement as particularly important. Chile, Portugal, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Thailand display a feminine orientation, where personal intrinsic balance and the importance of life choices that improve society are important.

• The *power distance* dimension focuses on the appropriateness or importance of status differences and social hierarchies. People from high power distance cultures accept a particular social order or hierarchy and believe that recognized authorities should not be challenged or questioned and that those with preferred social status have a right to use their power for whatever purposes or in whatever ways they deem desirable. In contrast, people in low power distance cultures believe in the importance of social equality—reducing hierarchical structures, minimizing social or class inequities, questioning or challenging authority figures, and using power only for legitimate purposes. Canada, Ireland, Israel, and the United

States represent low power distance cultures favoring high egalitarianism. The Arab countries, Guatemala, Egypt, Ghana, Malaysia, and Venezuela represent high power distance cultures that presume that each person has a rightful and protected place in the social order. It should be noted that high power distance cultures tend to be collectivist, whereas low power distance cultures tend to be individualistic.

• The *uncertainty avoidance* dimension deals with how cultures adapt to change and cope with uncertainties. People in high uncertainty avoidance cultures demand consensus and do not tolerate dissent or allow deviation in the behaviors of members. Rather, they try to ensure certainty and security through an extensive set of rules, regulations, and rituals; they resist change and have higher levels of anxiety as well as intolerance for ambiguity. Conversely, people in low uncertainty avoidance cultures live day-to-day, regarding the uncertainties of life as natural, and they are more willing to accept change and take risks. Hofstede (1991) characterizes the view of people in low uncertainty avoidance cultures as "what is different, is curious" (p. 119) and the view of people in high uncertainty avoidance cultures as "what is different, is dangerous" (p. 119). Canada, Denmark, England, India, Jamaica, Singapore, South Africa, and the United States all score low in uncertainty avoidance, being willing to accept dissent, tolerate deviance, and try new things. Spain, Egypt, Venezuela, Greece, Japan, and Ukraine regard the uncertainties of life as a continuous threat and therefore do not tolerate dissent or allow deviation in the behavior of cultural members.

• The *time* dimension or *long-term orientation* (Hofstede, 2001) draws on the work of the Chinese Culture Connection (1987) and refers to a person's point of reference about life and work. Long-term orientation cultures admire persistence, thriftiness, humility, and deferred gratification of needs. They also recognize status differences in interpersonal relationships and look forward to a satisfying old age. They believe good and evil depends on the circumstances and opposites complement each other. Short-term orientation cultures have a deep appreciation for tradition, personal steadfastness, maintaining the "face" of self and others, giving and receiving gifts and favors, and an expectation for quick results. They believe in absolute guidelines about good and evil, the need for cognitive consistency, and the use of probabilistic and analytic thinking. Cultures that tend to have long-term orientations include China, Taiwan, Japan, Brazil, India, Thailand, Singapore, and the Netherlands. Cultures that tend to have short-term orientations include Pakistan, Nigeria, the Philippines, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Germany, Poland, Sweden, and the United States.

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Hofstede's dimensions of cultural patterns and range of social behaviors continue to provide reasonable descriptions of the predominant tendencies in the cultures studied (Fernandez, Carlson, Stepina, & Nicholson, 1997; Merritt, 2000; Oudenhoven, 2001). Critics, however, argue that Hofstede's national cultural descriptions are invalid and misleading because of flawed research assumptions and faulty methods (S. Schwartz, 1994). Brenden McSweeney (2002) contends that Hofstede's "reductive, closed, single-cause analysis," which relied on questionnaires, is deficient compared to action theories that can cope with "change, power, variety, and multiple influences" (p. 118). Still, Hofstede's findings provide a powerful explanation for understanding cultural similarities and differences while describing important cultural expectations for a wide range of social behaviors that leaders and managers of multinational organizations should understand. Moreover, his study determined that managers had to adjust the corporate management philosophy to fit the beliefs, values, and behaviors of the country in which they were working if they hoped to be successful in a complex global arena.

Currently, a group of researchers are engaged in a long-term study of culture, leadership, and organizations that significantly extends Hofstede's studies. The Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) research program is designed to conceptualize, operationalize, test, and validate a cross-level integrated theory of the relationship between culture and societal, organizational, and leadership effectiveness (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). A team of 170 scholars has worked together since 1994 to study societal culture, organizational culture, and attributes of effective leadership in 62 cultures. GLOBE is a truly cross-cultural research program with the constructs being defined, conceptualized, and operationalized by a multicultural team of researchers and the data in each country being collected by investigators who were either natives of the cultures studied or had extensive knowledge and experience in that culture. Their approach addresses some of the concerns raised by Hofstede's critics, so their results should be of particular interest to leaders of multinational organizations and managers active in the international business arena.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's Value Orientation

The value orientations identified by Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck (1961) are deeply held beliefs about the way the world should be, and not necessarily the way it is.

- The *human nature orientation* focuses on the innate character of human nature and whether human beings should be seen as good, evil, or

a mixture of both. It further asks whether human beings are capable of change (mutable) or not able to change (immutable).

• The *person-nature orientation* examines the potential types of relations between humans and nature—mastery over nature, harmony with nature, or subjugation to nature. The United States attempts to dominate nature, whereas many Native American groups and the Japanese believe in the value of humans living in harmony with nature.

• The *relational orientation* identifies three potential ways whereby humans might define their relationships with others—individualism, lineality, and collaterality. Individualism is characterized by autonomy and a preference for individual goals and objectives over group goals and objectives. Lineality focuses on the group and group goals; however, the crucial issue is the continuity of the group through time. An example of this are the aristocracies found in many European countries. Finally, collaterality focuses on the value of the group, group membership, and group goals but not the group extended through time.

• The *activity orientation* focuses on three types of human activity—doing, being, and being-in-becoming or growing. A doing orientation emphasizes productivity and tangible outcomes. This orientation is prevalent in the United States. The being orientation is characterized by a sense of spontaneity, emotional gratification, and personal balance. This orientation can be found in Central and South America, and in Greek and Spanish cultural groups. The final activity orientation, being-in-becoming or growing, is concerned with who we are and places importance on personal and spiritual development. Japan, for example, emphasizes doing as well as growing personally and spiritually.

• The *time orientation* examines how cultures come to terms with the past, the present, and the future. The past orientation predominates in cultures placing a high value on tradition and emphasizing ancestors and strong family ties. Many European and Asian societies place a relatively strong emphasis on the past, believing that history has something to contribute to an understanding of contemporary life. The present orientation predominates where people see only the here and now as real—the past is seen as unimportant and the future is seen as vague and unpredictable. Spain, Greece, and Mexico seem to emphasize the importance of the present, recognizing the value of living in the here and now and the potential of the current moment. Finally, the future orientation highly values change and progress. This orientation predominates in the United States, where it is optimistically accepted that the future will be "new and improved."

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One culture can be distinguished from another by the arrangement of the specific solutions it selects for each set of problem situations and how it gives meaning to the different orientations.

Parsons's Pattern Variables

Parsons's (1951) concept of pattern variables is another view of cultural variability. The six pattern variables identified are mutually exclusive orientations individuals consciously and/or unconsciously make and can therefore be used to analyze cultural differences (Parsons & Shils, 1951). They describe ways people have learned to meaningfully organize their experiences and perceive phenomena around them in a coherent and orderly fashion.

- The *self-collective orientation* is identical to individualism-collectivism, where people emphasize both personal achievement and responsibility or group achievement and joint responsibility.

- The *affectivity-affective neutrality orientation* is concerned with the extent to which people look for immediate gratification or delayed gratification and show their feelings plainly by laughing, smiling, grimacing, and gesturing or keep them carefully controlled and subdued. Members of Latin American cultures with an affectivity orientation are more likely to base decisions on emotional responses, whereas people from the affectively neutral United States are more likely to base decisions on cognitive information.

- The *universalism-particularism orientation* is concerned with treating all people equally or responding to people on their specific merits. People from cultures in which a universalistic orientation predominates strive for consistency and focus more on rules than relationships, whereas people from cultures in which a particularistic orientation predominates focus more on relationships and building informal networks with others and creating private understandings. Individualistic cultures like the United States are characterized by a universalistic orientation. A particularistic orientation characterizes collectivistic cultures like those in Asia.

- The *diffuseness-specificity orientation* refers to our perceptions of public versus private space and how we respond to people. In diffuse cultures everything is connected to everything, whereas specific cultures rigorously separate out private and public life. In Germany or Japan, one's standing and reputation cross over into every space or relationship, whereas in the United States a title such as CEO or doctor is a specific label for a specific job in a

specific place. Members of specific cultures often say, "Do not take this personally," but this can be interpreted as offensive by members of diffuse cultures where their ideas are not separated from themselves and are an extension of their personal honor.

• The *ascription-achievement orientation* focuses on whether societies ascribe status to people by virtue of age, class, gender, education, race, or ethnic group, or accord recognition to people on the basis of what they have achieved through their own efforts or personal accomplishments.

• The *instrumental-expressive orientation* is concerned with whether relational interactions with others are principally viewed as a means to other goals or are valued as an end in and of themselves. People from cultures in which an expressive orientation predominates tend to value friendships for their own sake more than do people from cultures in which an instrumental orientation predominates. The instrumental orientation is the predominant pattern in the United States, whereas the expressive orientation predominates in many Arab, Latin American, and Asian cultures.

Philipsen's Speech Code Theory

Gerry Philipsen (1992) describes culture as "a socially constructed and historically transmitted pattern of symbols, meanings, premises, and rules" (p. 7). He proposes three general propositions regarding speech code theory: (1) a speech code involves a culturally distinctive psychology, sociology, and rhetoric; (2) the terms, rules, and premises of a speech code are inextricably woven into speaking itself; and (3) the artful use of a shared speech code is a sufficient condition for predicting, explaining, and controlling the form of discourse about the intelligibility, prudence, and morality of communication conduct (Philipsen, 1989, 1997, 2001). Philipsen presents us with an interesting perspective to explain and even predict the discourse within a language community. Chapter 5 further elaborates on Philipsen's speech code theory.

The Interface of International Business, Culture, and Communication

Alfred G. Smith (1966) says that "the way people communicate is the way they live. It is their culture. Who talks with whom? How? And about what? These are questions of communication and culture" (p. 1). Clearly, culture and communication are inseparable.

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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND RELATED TERMS

Given the interface between culture and communication, we are ready to present a working definition of intercultural communication. *Intercultural communication* is a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process whereby people from different cultures negotiate, at varying levels of awareness, shared meanings. What distinguishes intercultural communication from other types of communication is that we are interacting with *people from different cultures*—people perceived as "different from us" (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989). This perceived cultural variability and diversity might include differences in communication and social style, worldview, customs, traditions, norms, rules, roles, and expectations. It is this medley of people from diverse cultures that prompts our study and requires international business to adjust, accommodate, and appeal to commonality—to exercise cultural sensitivity and employ intercultural coping skills.

Several related terms commonly applied to the intercultural communication arena also require definition.

- *Intracultural communication* refers to communication between and among members of the same culture—people who share the same beliefs, values, and constructs.

- *Interethnic communication* is communication between people from different ethnic groups.

- *Interracial communication* is communication between people from different races.

- *Cross-cultural communication* technically implies a comparison of specific interpersonal variables such as conversational distance or conflict management styles across two or more different cultures, but it is often used as a synonym for intercultural communication.

SITUATING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

W. Barnett Pearce (1989), in his book *Communication and the Human Condition,* develops a communication perspective that can help us situate intercultural communication and understand the role of the cosmopolitan communicator. His notion of how communication works focuses on three terms: coordination, coherence, and mystery.

- *Coordination* involves meshing one's messages and actions with those of another and exists when the parties feel that the sequence of messages

and actions seem logical or appropriate. Because people enter conversations with a variety of abilities and competencies, achieving coordination can be difficult at times (Pearce, 1989).

- *Coherence* refers to the process by which we attempt to interpret the world around us and our place in it. It is the effort by which "persons invent, test, and tell themselves and others stories that make intelligible the world around them, tame the terrors of history, make familiar the unknowns that go thump in the night, and give acceptable accounts for their success and failures in coordinating with other persons" (Pearce, 1989, p. 67).

- *Mystery* "is a reminder of what is beyond the immediate, present moment" (Pearce, 1989, p. 23). It is the sense of wonder and recognition that there could be a range of stories or interpretations.

An examination of coordinated management of meaning (CMM) theory can illustrate the challenges confronting a cosmopolitan communicator and help explain the difficulties of coordination between people from different cultures (Cronen, Chen, & Pearce, 1988).

COORDINATED MANAGEMENT OF MEANING

Coordinated management of meaning is a comprehensive communication theory that states that people interpret and act on the basis of rules that allow them to coordinate their meanings when interacting with others (Cronen, Pearce, & Harris, 1982). *Constitutive rules* help us understand or interpret an event or message; they tell us what certain actions constitute or mean. For example, in some cultures preparing a detailed agenda and assertively guiding discussion count as leadership, whereas in other cultures indirectness and subtlety constitute effective leadership. *Regulative rules* are essentially rules of action that tell us when it's appropriate to do certain things and how to respond or behave in an interaction. For example, in some cultures heated business discussions where individuals promote a personal position is appropriate business conduct, but in other cultures the maintenance of harmony and the sense of group regulates business behavior. When constitutive and regulative rules are understood and coordinated, interactions tend to run smoothly and comfortably. But friction and misunderstandings often result when individuals operate according to different constitutive and regulative rules. Rules tell us what interpretations and actions are logical or appropriate in a given situation and are tied to our overall hierarchy of meanings (Cronen & Pearce, 1981).

Pearce and Cronen (1980) further develop a *nested hierarchy* in which one context is embedded within another and each context is itself part of a larger

context. They identify six contexts or levels of meaning in their hierarchy, but are quick to note that there may be additional contexts or levels of meaning that have not yet been recognized.

- The *content* level represents the raw sensory data—the denotative meaning of words and what we see and hear. To construct the meaning of this content, we have to refer to higher levels of meaning in the hierarchy.

- *Speech acts* communicate the intention of the speaker, and the relationship embedded in speech acts indicates how the content should be taken.

- *Episodes* are recurring communication routines that have definite rules and boundaries—definable beginnings, middles, and endings. Various cultures and speech communities have developed different episodes, some of which are functionally similar and some of which are not. Consequently, episodes are larger frames for interpreting speech acts.

- *Relationships* include mutually scripted expectations among group members and reflect how we interact with others (Shailor, 1994).

- *Autobiographies,* originally labeled "life-scripts," represent an individual's view of himself or herself that both shapes and is shaped by communication. Think of autobiographies as clusters of past and present speech acts and episodes that define your sense of self. Autobiographies reveal a person's overall pattern of communicating, responding, and acting in the world. It's important to note that our autobiographies are not fixed or static, but constantly evolving and changing.

- *Cultural patterns* or archetypes can be described as "very broad images of world order and [a person's] relationship to that order" (Cronen & Pearce, 1981, p. 21). They are the overriding cultural rules that coordinate our personal interpretations with others; however, different speech communities may have different worldviews and distinctive ways of interpreting experiences that affect how groups construct meanings or rhetorical visions (see Bormann, 1972, 1982, 1985, 1990; Bormann, Cragan, & Shields, 1996).

Thus, from a CMM and intercultural communication perspective, "the human condition is that of being *variably enmeshed in multiple symbolic systems, each with its own logic of meaning and action*" (Pearce, 1989, p. 86).

Because different social groups develop distinct cultural patterns, communication between cultures is often laced with misunderstandings and plagued with confusion and misinterpretations. Moreover, particular barriers

or obstacles often jeopardize intercultural contact and impede effective intercultural communication.

BARRIERS TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

As international managers in expanding world corporations, you will be exposed daily to a bewildering variety of value systems that challenge your intercultural communication competencies and skills. You will need to see the world as a whole and recognize the importance of constructively managing stereotypes, controlling prejudice, avoiding discrimination, and reducing ethnocentrism. You will need to place a premium on effective intercultural communication and make every effort to become more cosmopolitan or one who can function "effectively *anywhere* in the world" (Harris & Moran, 1991, p. 6).

STEREOTYPES

Journalist Walter Lippman (1922) first introduced the term stereotyping and referred to stereotypes as "pictures in our heads," suggesting that they have both a cognitive component and an affective component. Stereotyping is a selection process that we use to organize and simplify perceptions of others, and stereotypes are our mental representations of others. The content of our stereotypes reveals our "constellation of beliefs about members of social groups" (Operario & Fiske, 2001, p. 23). Our stereotypes also create expectations regarding how members of other groups will behave, and we unconsciously try to confirm our expectations when we communicate with others and tend to process information that is consistent with our stereotypes (Snyder & Haugen, 1995). Consequently, the stereotypes we hold directly influence our communication with others, and our initial predictions about others are based on the stereotypes we have about their culture, race, or ethnic group. However, stereotypes are often inaccurate, and they do not work well with individuals who have worked in international business or who have lived or studied abroad because they will display increased differences from their national cultures (M. Lewis, 2000).

So, how can we more constructively manage our customary tendency to stereotype? Richards and Hewstone (2001) point to subtyping and subgrouping as constructive and positive stereotype control strategies. One way we can deal with those who do not fit our original stereotypes is to put them in a "subtype" that includes members of other groups who are "exceptions to the rule." Another way we can deal with those who do not fit our stereotypes is to put members of the group who are alike in some ways and different in others into one "subgroup" while placing those who fit the stereotype in another subgroup. Subgrouping

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leads to new categories and may better facilitate stereotype change. Stereotypes are a problem when you tend to see only that information that supports your stereotyped belief rather than information that runs counter to it. However, by creating subtypes or developing more accurate subgroupings, you can make more precise cultural and sociocultural predictions about others.

Prejudice

Whereas a stereotype is a belief or conviction that something is probably true or that something exists, a prejudice is an attitude or an evaluation. Prejudice, then, may be defined as a positive or negative attitude toward a group or its individual members. Most people, however, think of it as negative. Allport (1954) defines negative ethnic prejudice as "an antipathy based on a faulty and inflexible generalization . . . expressed . . . toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual . . . member of that group" (p. 7). Racism, for example, is a tendency to categorize people who are culturally different in terms of their physical traits. Prejudice is often thought of in terms of a dichotomy; however, it is more accurate to think of prejudice as varying along a continuum from low to high (E. Smith, 1994). This suggests that we are all prejudiced to some degree or another.

Discrimination

Prejudice should not be confused with its behavioral counterpart, discrimination. Discrimination can be thought of as prejudice "in action." Essentially, discrimination involves behaving in such a way that members of outgroups are treated disadvantageously (R. M. Williams, 1947). This disadvantaged treatment can range from segregation to biases in the availability of housing, employment, education, legal protection, and other resources. In sum, certain individuals are treated unequally solely because of their membership in a particular group.

A contemporary aspect of prejudice and discrimination that needs to be addressed is hate speech. Hate speech can range from "speech attacks based on race, religion or sexual orientation to any offensive expression directed toward women, discrete minorities, and ethnic, religious, and racial groups" (Ruscher, 2001, p. 194). Words become weapons of animosity and loathing that foster hostile intergroup relations and often physical violence (I. Allen, 1990).

Ethnocentrism

Ruhly (1982) defines ethnocentrism as "the tendency to interpret or to judge all other groups, their environments, and their communication according to the categories and values of our own culture" (p. 28). Ethnocentrism, then, is a

belief in cultural superiority where people perceive their nation as the center of the world and believe that the values of their culture are natural and correct and that people from other cultures who do things differently are wrong. Everyone is ethnocentric to some degree, and ethnocentrism exists in all cultures (Triandis, 1994). Fisher (1997) refers to ethnocentrism as learned mindsets. The opposite of ethnocentrism is cultural relativism, which involves trying to understand others' behavior in the context of the cultures or groups of people engaging in the behavior (Herskovits, 1973). Cultural relativism can be developed and is necessary to engage in effective intercultural communication and for conducting international business.

Willis Harmon (1988) of the Stanford Research Institute argues that we can no longer view our world or culture in terms of industrial-age paradigms that have influenced our past perceptions, values, and behavior. Today's business leaders are challenged to create new models of management systems and organizations that are better suited to our increasingly complex geocentric stage of development. For this to happen, they must become more innovative and cosmopolitan. A cosmopolitan leader is a "citizen of the world" who interacts comfortably with people who come from diverse backgrounds, hold different values, and express discrepant beliefs (Pearce & Pearce, 2000).

Cosmopolitan Leadership and an Emerging World Culture

To perform well in this increasingly intercultural world requires a special kind of personal orientation where the different cultural elements are internalized and one is open to further intercultural growth. The cosmopolitan communicator or "universal person" is not owned by his or her culture but "is capable of negotiating ever new formations of reality . . . [and] lives on the boundary" (Adler, 1987, p. 39). Cosmopolitan or "transcultural" communicators show respect for all cultures; demonstrate an understanding of what individuals in other cultures think, feel, and believe; and appreciate the differences among cultures (Walsh, 1973, 1979; Y. Kim, 1988, 2001). They possess a mental outlook that exhibits greater cognitive differentiation, permitting them to step into and "participate in the other's world view" (Bennett, 1977, p. 49).

COSMOPOLITAN COMMUNICATORS AND COSMOPOLITAN COMMUNICATION

Cosmopolitan communicators possess a number of specific qualities: (1) the cognitive complexity necessary to perceive and consider alternative

explanations of phenomena, (2) the mindfulness needed for active informa-
tion processing, and (3) the rhetorical sensitivity required for adapting
messages to diverse audiences. Cosmopolitan communicators with highly
developed interpretive schemes can make more discriminations than those
who see the world simplistically, thus they can make more sophisticated dis-
tinctions in a situation than can cognitively uncomplicated people (Burleson &
Caplan, 1998; Delia, O'Keefe, & O'Keefe, 1982). They are astute observers of
the human scene, capable of picturing people using a vast range of colors,
shades, and hues (Burlson & Waltman, 1988). Moreover, they have a greater
capacity to create person-centered messages and employ a rhetorical message
design logic that seeks to accomplish multiple goals (O'Keefe, 1988, 1996).

Mindfulness is a "state of alertness and lively awareness" characterized by
actively processing information, analyzing it, categorizing it, and considering
how and why distinctions may exist (Langer, 1989b, p. 138). Cosmopolitan
communicators are mindful in that they are open to new information and rec-
ognize that there is more than one perspective that can be used to understand
or explain our interactions with others (Langer, 1989a). This results in their
being able to "negotiate potentially problematic social interactions more effec-
tively" than "mindless" individuals who engage in the menial processing of
information that is only relevant to their current tasks (Devine, Evett, &
Vasquez-Suson, 1996, p. 444). Situations that are characterized by ambiguity or
uncertainty necessitate mindfulness as communicators consider their behavior
in relation to the circumstances (Burgoon & Langer, 1996).

Cosmopolitan communicators are rhetorically adaptive individuals who
avoid rigidity in communicating with others and attempt to balance self-
interests with the interests of others. They try to adjust what they say to the
level, mood, and beliefs of the other person. They do not forsake their own val-
ues, but they realize that they can communicate those values in a variety of
ways (Hart & Burks, 1972). Cosmopolitan communication champions tenta-
tiveness over rigidity and appreciates the complexity of social exchange (Hart,
Carlson, & Eadie, 1980).

COSMOPOLITAN LEADERS AND AN
EMERGING WORLD CULTURE

Cosmopolitan leaders are sensitive, innovative, and participative leaders, capa-
ble of operating comfortably in a global or pluralistic environment (Harris &
Moran, 1991). These multinational and multicultural representatives are open
and flexible when approaching others, can cope with situations and people
quite different from their background, and are willing to adjust personal atti-
tudes and perceptions. Cosmopolitan leaders strive to create cultural synergy

by seeking the widest input and combining the best in varied cultures while managing accelerating change. They are knowledgeable about cultural influences and build on the very differences in the world's people for mutual growth and accomplishment by cooperation.

As we become increasingly cosmopolitan, we gain new perspectives and outlooks that reflect an integrative "third-culture" perspective (Casmir, 1999). We are better able to reconcile seemingly contradictory elements of peoples and cultures and transform them into a complementary system. Gudykunst and Kim (2003) note that "becoming intercultural is a gradual process of liberating ourselves from our limited and exclusive interests and viewpoints and striving to attain a perspective in which we see ourselves as a part of a larger, more inclusive whole" (p. 385).

Recent research has also linked cosmopolitan leadership with a concept called "emotional intelligence" (Gardner & Stough, 2002; Sivanathan & Fekken, 2002). Where traditional notions of intelligence emphasize knowledge, training, and expertise in a particular field, the qualities associated with emotional intelligence are (1) self-awareness, (2) self-regulation, (3) motivation, (4) empathy, and (5) social skill (Goleman, 1998; Palmer, Walls, Burgess, & Stough, 2001). Specifically, emotionally intelligent individuals display self-confidence, comfort with ambiguity, openness to change, optimism, commitment, and people-centeredness that manifests itself in cooperative relationships. The cosmopolitan leader is active instead of reactive, shaping ideas instead of responding to them. Cosmopolitan leadership will be further outlined in Chapter 3, which addresses the concept of cultural synergy, and more fully developed in Chapter 7, which examines leadership, teams, and the global workforce.

The globalization of the economy, coupled with advances in mass media and transportation, is breaking down the traditional barriers among groups of peoples and their differing cultures. A homogenization process is underway that is contributing to the emergence of a world culture. A *world culture* is the idea that, as conventional impediments of differing cultures decline and the commonality of human needs is emphasized, one culture will emerge—a new culture to which all people will adhere (Chaney & Martin, 2004). This world culture demands more culturally sensitive leaders who are alert to serving the commonality of human needs and markets with strategies that are transnational. It requires cosmopolitan leaders who can transcend their own culture.

Summary

Those in international business are exposed daily to a bewildering variety of value systems and differing business practices. To communicate effectively in

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this hectic business environment requires an understanding of other cultures, an awareness of the interdependence of nations, and the need to break interfering cultural barriers in order to find productive ways to work constructively with people of all cultures.

Today, the changing nature of business and the increasing amount of commerce conducted by global organizations require a fundamentally different kind of leader. Cosmopolitan leaders are familiar with their own culture as well as those that make up the world bazaar. They see in these multiple cultural orientations a vast array of opportunities and are willing to accept a degree of predictable risk to achieve their goals. They are technologically savvy but not prone to getting lost in details or overlooking the personal touch; entrepreneurial and passionate about what they do as well as rhetorically sensitive to others; and inspirational and inclusive rather than independent or autocratic. Being flexible, open-minded, and person-centered, they are willing to initiate communication and cooperatively pursue their objectives. For them, the international business terrain is a dynamic and active milieu.