The history of our planet has been in great part the history of the mixing of peoples.

—Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.¹

In 1948 the painter and writer Wyndham Lewis wrote about a Global Village in his book titled America and Cosmic Man. Several years later his friend Marshall McLuhan also used the term to describe how technological advances of mass media would
eventually disintegrate the natural time and space barriers inherent in human communication. McLuhan predicted that through the elimination of such barriers people would continue to interact and live on a global scale but one that will have been virtually transformed into a village. At the dawn of the 21st century, Marshall McLuhan’s vision of a global village is no longer considered an abstract idea but a near certainty. Technological and sociopolitical changes have made the world a smaller planet to inhabit. The technological feasibility of the mass media to bring events from across the globe into our homes, businesses, and schools dramatically reduces the distance between peoples of different cultures and societies. Telecommunication systems link the world via satellites and fiber optics. Supersonic jets carry people from one country to another faster than the speed of sound. Politically, the end of the cold war between the United States and the former Soviet Union has brought decades of partisan tensions to an end. Some countries that were once bitter enemies are now joining forces. Mass migrations force interaction between people of different races, nationalities, and ethnicities. The late noted historian and Pulitzer Prize winner Arthur Schlesinger warns us that history tells an ugly story of what happens when people of diverse cultural, ethnic, religious, or linguistic backgrounds converge in one place. The hostility of one group of people against another, different group of people is among the most instinctive of human drives. Schlesinger contends that unless a common goal binds diverse people together, tribal hostilities will drive them apart. By replacing the conflict of political ideologies that dominated in the 20th century, ethnic and racial strife will usher in the new millennium as the explosive issue. Only through intercultural communication can such conflict be managed and reduced. Only by competently and peacefully interacting with others who are different from ourselves can our global village survive.

THE NEED FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

International tensions around the globe, the most noticeable to U.S. Americans being those in the Middle East, are striking examples of the need for effective and competent intercultural communication. Such conflicts are often fueled by political, ethnic, and religious differences. Indeed, national conflicts within our own borders, often ignited by racial and ethnic tensions, underscore the necessity for skillful intercultural communication. Perhaps more importantly, the need for competent intercultural communication is felt intrapersonally, within our own personal, social, and professional relationships. Consider the following situations that Jim, an undergraduate student at a midwestern university, has faced in the past few days.

Situation #1

Jim has just met Bridget, an exchange student from England. They are talking in Jim’s dorm room.

Jim: So Bridget, are you enjoying your first few days in the U.S.?

Bridget: Yes, but I am a bit paggered, you know. Got pissed last night.
Jim: Oh.... sorry... are you having problems with someone? Can I help?

Bridget: Not a'tall, oh no, nothing traumatic, just farty things, you know. Nothing to have a dicky fit over.

Jim: Ah, yeah, right.

(Jim's girlfriend, Betsy, enters the room).

Betsy: Hello.

Jim: Hi Betsy! Hey, this is Bridget. She's from England.

Betsy: Hi Bridget.

Bridget: Hello. Nice to meet you. Jim and I were just having a bit of intercourse. Won't you join us?

Betsy: You were what? (leaves the room)

Jim: (Running after her) No! Betsy, that's not true! We were just talking! I swear!

Situation #2

Later that same day, Jim is trying to explain to Betsy that nothing was happening between him and Bridget when Jahan, an exchange student from India, enters in the room unannounced.

Jim: (to Betsy) So, I swear we weren't doing anything except talking.

(Jahan enters)

Jahan: Hello Jim. Who is this with you?

Jim: Oh, hi Jahan. This is Betsy. Betsy, this is Jahan; he lives just down the hall.

Betsy: Hi Jahan.

Jahan: Is this your girlfriend, Jim?

Jim: Ah . . . yeah, she is.

Jahan: Are you two going to marry? Have children?

Jim: Ah, well . . .

Betsy: Uh . . . we really haven't discussed that.

Jahan: Oh, I see. Is your family not wealthy enough for her, Jim? What is your father's occupation?

Jim: What?
Unfortunately, Jim has found himself in some rather awkward situations here. The mis-
interpretations in each of the situations above are due mostly to cultural and linguistic dif-
fferences. In Bridget’s England, for example, the phrase *paggered* means to be tired. The
colloquialism *pissed* means to get drunk, *farty* refers to something insignificant, a *dicky fit*
is an emotional outburst, and *intercourse* simply means to have conversation. Translated in
terms Jim can understand, Bridget was tired because she had been drunk the night before,
but she did not think it significant enough to complain. Upon meeting Betsy, she simply
invited her into the conversation.

The second conversation is a bit more complicated. The late Dr. Pittu Laungani, the well-
known Indian-born psychologist, has written extensively about the culture of his native
India. In his writings, Laungani asserts that Indians tend to initiate social conversations with
complete strangers quite easily. According to Laungani, Indians often ask, without embar-
rassment, very personal and delicate questions concerning one’s age, marital status, occu-
pation, income, religious beliefs, and so on. Laungani professes that Westerners need to
learn that these questions are not to be taken with any offense.\(^3\)

**Benefits of Intercultural Communication**

Although the challenges of an increasingly diverse world are great, the benefits are even
greater. Communicating and establishing relationships with people from different cultures
can lead to a whole host of benefits, including healthier communities; increased interna-
tional, national, and local commerce; reduced conflict; and personal growth through
increased tolerance (see Table 1.1).

Joan England argues that genuine community is a condition of togetherness in which
people have lowered their defenses and learn to accept and celebrate their differences.
England contends that we can no longer define equality as “sameness,” but instead must
value our differences with others whether they be about race, gender, ethnicity, lifestyle, or
even occupation or professional discipline.\(^4\) Healthy communities are made up of individ-
uals working collectively for the benefit of everyone, not just their own group. Through
open and honest intercultural communication, people can work together to achieve goals
that benefit everyone, regardless of group or culture, including the global community in the
home, business, or neighborhood. Healthy communities support all community members
and strive to understand, appreciate, and acknowledge each member.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>TABLE 1.1</strong> Benefits of Intercultural Communication</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Healthier communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Increased commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reduced conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Personal growth through tolerance</td>
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Our ability to interact with persons from different cultures both from within and outside our borders has immense economic benefits. The top 10 countries with which the United States trades, in terms of both imports and exports, include, in order, Canada, China, Mexico, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, South Korea, France, Taiwan, and Venezuela. In 2007, U.S. trade with these 10 countries accounted for nearly $2 trillion (i.e., $2,000,000,000,000). In 2007, China alone, the United States’ second leading trade partner, accounted for nearly $500 billion in trade. Only through successful intercultural communication can such business potentials be realized.  

Conflict is inevitable; we will never be able to erase it. We can, however, through cooperative intercultural communication, reduce and manage conflict. Often, conflict stems from our inability to see another person’s point of view, especially if that person is from a different culture. We develop blatant negative generalizations about the person, which are often incorrect, which leads to mistrust. Table 1.2 summarizes some of the most common stereotypes, documented by researchers, of different racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Such feelings lead to defensive behavior, which fosters conflict. If we can learn to think and act cooperatively by engaging in assertive (not aggressive) and responsive intercultural communication, we can effectively manage and reduce conflict with others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Stereotypes</th>
<th>. . . about Blacks</th>
<th>. . . about Whites</th>
<th>. . . about Asians</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“They’re lazy.”</td>
<td>“They think they know everything.”</td>
<td>“They’re sneaky.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They live on welfare.”</td>
<td>“They’re all arrogant.”</td>
<td>“They’re good at math.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They like to dance.”</td>
<td>“They’re all rich.”</td>
<td>“I wouldn’t trust them.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They smoke crack.”</td>
<td>“They’re materialistic.”</td>
<td>“They’re really shy.”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As you communicate with people from different cultures, you learn more about them and their way of life, including their values, history, and habits, and the substance of their personality. As your relationship develops, you start to understand them better, perhaps even empathizing with them. One of the things you will learn (eventually) is that although your cultures are different, you have much in common. As humans we all have the same basic desires and needs; we just have different ways of achieving them. As we learn that our way is not the only way, we develop a tolerance for difference. This can be accomplished only when we initiate relationships with people who are different from ourselves. We can learn far more about Japanese culture by initiating and maintaining a relationship with a Japanese student at our college or university than we will by traveling to Japan for a 2- or 3-week vacation. Moreover, although this may sound contradictory, the more we learn about others and other cultures, the more we begin to learn about ourselves. When we observe how others conduct their lives, we begin to understand how we conduct our own lives.
Diversity in the United States

One need not travel to faraway countries to understand the need for, and experience the benefits of, intercultural communication. Largely because of immigration trends, cultural and ethnic diversity in the United States is a fact of life. Immigrants, in record numbers, are crossing U.S. borders. According to the latest available U.S. government statistics (i.e., 2004), nearly 34 million persons living in the United States, about 12%, were not U.S. citizens at birth. More than half of these people were born in Latin America and approximately 25% are Asian.7

Every 10 years, at the beginning of a new decade, the U.S. Department of Commerce conducts a census. The results of the 2000 census profile the remarkable racial and ethnic diversity that has been a hallmark of American society. From 1990 to 2000, the U.S. population growth of 33 million people was the largest census-to-census increase in American history. In early 2008, there were approximately 303 million people in the United States (i.e., roughly 4.5% of the world’s population). Of these people, nearly 70% were White non-Hispanics, approximately 13% were Hispanic, 13% were Black non-Hispanic, 4% were Asian or Pacific Islander, and 1% were American Indian.

Overall, from 2000 to 2004 the U.S. population grew 4.3%. But different racial and ethnic groups grow at different rates. For example, White non-Hispanics make up nearly 70% of the U.S. population today. But Census Bureau data suggest that by the year 2050, the non-Hispanic White population will shrink to approximately 50% of the population (see Table 1.3). Conversely, the Hispanic population will grow to nearly 25% of the population and the Asian population will grow to about 8%. The Black population is estimated to remain relatively stable at about 15% of the population by 2050.8

One of the most significant population trends in the United States is the growth of the Hispanic population. The federal government uses the terms Hispanic and Latino interchangeably and classifies Hispanics/Latinos as an ethnic group but not a racial group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1.3</th>
<th>Percent of 2000 Total Population and Projected 2020 and 2050 Population of the United States</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (not Hispanic)</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black alone</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian alone</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other races*</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes American Indian and Alaska Native alone, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander alone.
According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanics are a heterogeneous group composed of Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, persons from Central and South America, and persons of other Hispanic origin. In 2006, nearly 80% of all Hispanics/Latinos lived in the southern or western areas of the United States. In fact, half of all Hispanics in the United States live in two states, California and Texas. Just over 8% live in the Midwest, and about 14% live in the Northeast. But that trend is likely to change in the upcoming decades as the Hispanic population expands geographically.

In addition to the rapid growth of non-White populations in the United States, another trend is emerging: An increasing number of groups are revitalizing their ethnic traditions and promoting their cultural and ethnic uniqueness through language. Language is a vital part of maintaining one’s cultural heritage, and many people become very protective of their native language. For example, in July 2002, in Brown County, Wisconsin, a county with a sizable Hmong and Hispanic community, the county Board of Commissioners made English the official language of its government and called for more spending to promote English fluency. The all-White Brown County board voted 17–8 to approve the measure. “It’s saying this is our official language. This is what we believe in, and we should encourage English,” said then Board Supervisor John Vander Leest. On the other hand, in August 2004, the Texas border town of El Cenizo, whose population is heavily Hispanic, adopted Spanish as its official language. Mayor Rafael Rodriguez said that he and most of the town’s residents speak only Spanish. According to Rodriguez, “In past administrations, the meetings were done in English and they did not explain anything.” The vote means that town business will be conducted in Spanish, which then will be translated into English for official documents to meet the requirements of Texas law. Rodriguez said the city council’s intent was not to usurp English or create divisions, but to make local government more accessible to the town’s residents. “What we are looking for is that the people of the community who attend the meetings and who only speak Spanish be able to voice their opinions,” Rodriguez said. According to 2003 data, nearly one in five people in the United States (i.e., 47 million) speaks a language other than English at home. Of those 47 million, nearly 30 million speak Spanish at home. Ten percent speak an Indo-European language, and about 7% speak an Asian or Pacific Islander language. Interestingly, most of the people who speak a language other than English at home report that they speak English very well. When these people are combined with those who speak only English at home, more than 92% of the U.S. population has no difficulty speaking English.

Although the United States prides itself on being a nation of immigrants, there is a growing sense of uncertainty, fear, and distrust between different cultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups. These feelings create anxiety that can foster separatism rather than unity. Arthur Schlesinger alerts us that a cult of ethnicity has arisen both among non-Anglo Whites and among non-White minorities to denounce the idea of a melting pot, to challenge the concept of “one people,” and to protect, promote, and perpetuate separate ethnic and racial communities. Many Americans are frustrated, confused, and uncertain about these linguistic and definitional issues. Only through intercultural communication can such uncertainty be reduced. Only when diverse people come together and interact can they unify rather than separate. Unity is impossible without communication. Intercultural communication is a necessity.
**Human Communication**

Communication is everywhere. Everywhere, every day, people are communicating. Even when they are alone, people are bombarded with communication. Communication professor Charles Larson estimates that, in 2007, most Americans were exposed to more than 5,000 persuasive messages every day. Most people would be miserable if they were not allowed to communicate with others. Indeed, solitary confinement is perhaps the worst form of punishment inflicted on humans. Human communication—that is, the ability to symbolize and use language—separates humans from animals. Communication with others is the essence of what it means to be human. Through communication, people conduct their lives. People define themselves via their communication with others. Communication is the vehicle by which people initiate, maintain, and terminate their relationships with others. Communication is the means by which people influence and persuade others. Through communication, local, regional, national, and international conflicts are managed and resolved.

Ironically, however, communication, and particularly one’s *style* of communication, can be the source of many problems. Marriage counselors and divorce lawyers indicate that a breakdown in communication is the most frequently cited reason for relational dissolution in the United States. A specific kind of communication, that is, public speaking, is one of the most frequently cited fears people have, even more than they fear death.

This book is about the ubiquitous subject labeled communication. Specifically, this is a book about *intercultural* communication; that is, communication between people of different cultures and ethnicities. Throughout the course of this book, you will be introduced to a whole host of concepts and theories that explain the process of people of differing cultural backgrounds coming together and exchanging verbal and nonverbal messages. Chapter 1 is designed as an introductory chapter and is divided into three parts. The first part of the chapter outlines and discusses the nature of communication. This part of the chapter will examine communication variables that apply to everyone, regardless of cultural background. The second part outlines and discusses culture. Culture is seen as a paradox; that is, culture is simultaneously a very subtle and clearly defined influence on human thought processes and behavior. The last part of the chapter presents a model of intercultural communication that will serve as the organizing scheme of the rest of this book.

**The Nature of Human Communication**

Because of its ubiquitous nature, communication is very difficult to define. Nearly 40 years ago, Frank Dance compiled a list of 98 different definitions of communication. A few years later, Dance and Carl Larson presented a listing of over 125 definitions of communication. Even today, if you were to go to your university library and select 10 different introductory communication texts, the probability is that each will offer a different definition of communication. Although there are many definitions of communication, these definitions are important because the way people define communication influences how they think and theorize about communication. Although there is no universally agreed-upon definition of communication, most communication scholars agree on certain properties of communication that describe its nature. Outlined below are eight of these properties along with eight definitions of communication (see Table 1.4). These definitions come from a variety of scholars with diverse backgrounds in the communication field.
Almost all communication scholars concur that communication is a process. A **process** is anything that is ongoing, ever-changing, and continuous. A process does not have a specific beginning or ending point. A process is not static or at rest; it is always moving. The human body is a process; it is always aging. Communication is always developing; it is never still or motionless. There is no exact beginning or ending point of a communication exchange. Although individual **verbal** messages have definite beginning and ending points, the overall process of communication does not. For example, Jose and Juan meet in the hallway and greet each other. Jose says, “What’s up, Juan?” and Juan says, “Not much, man.” Both Jose’s and Juan’s verbal messages have exact beginning and ending points. But to determine exactly when and where their **nonverbal** communication begins and ends is virtually impossible. They may not be verbally communicating with each other, but they are still communicating nonverbally. Even if they walk away from each other, they are communicating that they are no longer talking with each other. A process is something that continues to develop and change; it does not stop, nor can it reverse itself. Because communication is irreversible, it affects future communication. How Jose and Juan interact with each other today is very much influenced by how they interacted yesterday, last week, or even years ago. Think about your own relationships with your friends and how what you have said to each other in the past influences what you say today. Imagine the last time you had an argument with your boyfriend or girlfriend, for example. You may have said some

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**Table 1.4 Eight Properties and Definitions of Communication**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Process</td>
<td>“Communication theory reflects a process point of view . . . you cannot talk about the beginning or the end of communication.” (Berlo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Dynamic</td>
<td>“Communication is a transaction among symbol users in which meanings are dynamic, changing as a function of earlier usages and of changes in perceptions and metaperceptions. Common to both meanings is the notion that communication is timebound and irreversible.” (Bowers &amp; Bradac)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Interactive-Transactive</td>
<td>“Communication occurs when two or more people interact through the exchange of messages.” (Goss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Symbolic</td>
<td>“All the symbols of the mind, together with the means of conveying them through space and preserving then in time.” (Cooley)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Intentional</td>
<td>“Communication has as its central interest those behavioral situations in which a source transmits a message to a receiver(s) with conscious intent to affect the latter’s behavior.” (Miller)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Contextual</td>
<td>“Communication always and inevitably occurs within some context.” (Fisher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ubiquitous</td>
<td>“Communication is the discriminatory response of an organism to a stimulus.” (Stevens)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Cultural</td>
<td>“Culture is communication . . . communication is culture.” (Hall)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Dimension 1: Process.* Almost all communication scholars concur that communication is a process. A **process** is anything that is ongoing, ever-changing, and continuous. A process does not have a specific beginning or ending point. A process is not static or at rest; it is always moving. The human body is a process; it is always aging. Communication is always developing; it is never still or motionless. There is no exact beginning or ending point of a communication exchange. Although individual **verbal** messages have definite beginning and ending points, the overall process of communication does not. For example, Jose and Juan meet in the hallway and greet each other. Jose says, “What’s up, Juan?” and Juan says, “Not much, man.” Both Jose’s and Juan’s verbal messages have exact beginning and ending points. But to determine exactly when and where their **nonverbal** communication begins and ends is virtually impossible. They may not be verbally communicating with each other, but they are still communicating nonverbally. Even if they walk away from each other, they are communicating that they are no longer talking with each other. A process is something that continues to develop and change; it does not stop, nor can it reverse itself. Because communication is irreversible, it affects future communication. How Jose and Juan interact with each other today is very much influenced by how they interacted yesterday, last week, or even years ago. Think about your own relationships with your friends and how what you have said to each other in the past influences what you say today. Imagine the last time you had an argument with your boyfriend or girlfriend, for example. You may have said some
things you now regret. Such interaction influences your relationships and how you interact today.

**Dimension 2: Dynamic.** Inextricably bound to the notion that communication is a process is that communication is dynamic. The terms *process* and *dynamic* are closely related. Part of what makes communication a process is its dynamic nature. Something that is *dynamic* is considered active or forceful. Unfortunately, communication is typically discussed as if it were some physical entity or thing that people can hold or touch. Because communication is a dynamic process, it is impossible to capture its essence in a written definition or graphic model. This problem is not unlike the problem faced by a photographer who tries to capture the dynamic essence of a running horse with a photograph. Certainly the photograph can be very informative about the horse, but the camera cannot make a complete reproduction of the object photographed. The relationship between the fore and hind legs, the beautiful “dynamic” muscular motions cannot be truly represented in a photograph. Hence, any discussion of communication as a dynamic process is subject to the same kind of limitations as the photographer. To fully appreciate the process, one must be a part of it or witness it in motion. As a dynamic process, communication is flexible, adaptive, and fluid. Communication is a dynamic process and hence is impossible to identically replicate in a picture, drawing, or model.

**Dimension 3: Interactive–Transactive.** Communication is interactive and transactive because it occurs between people. While some might argue that people can communicate with themselves (what is called *intrapersonal* communication), most scholars believe that interaction between people is a fundamental dimension of communication. Communication requires the *active* participation of two people sending and receiving messages. Active participation means that people are *consciously directing* their messages to someone else. This means that communication is a two-way process, or *interactive*. Likewise, to say that communication is *transactional* means that while Jose is sending messages to Juan, Juan is simultaneously sending messages to Jose. Juan’s eye contact, facial expression, and body language are nonverbal messages to Jose informing him how his message is being received. Each person in an interactional setting simultaneously sends (encodes) and receives (decodes) messages. For example, when you listen to your friends talk about the great party they went to last night, it is obvious to you that they are sending you messages. At the same time they describe the party to you, you are sending messages to them, too. Your eye contact, smiles, and other nonverbal reactions are communicating to them your interest in their story. Hence, both you and your friends are sending and receiving messages at the same time.

**Dimension 4: Symbolic.** That communication is symbolic is another fundamental assumption guiding most communication scholars. A *symbol* is an arbitrarily selected and learned stimulus that represents something else. Symbols can be verbal or nonverbal. Symbols are the vehicle by which the thoughts and ideas of one person can be communicated to another person. Messages are constructed with verbal and nonverbal symbols. Through symbols, meanings are transferred between people. Symbols (i.e., words) have no natural relationship with what they represent (they are arbitrarily selected and learned). For example, the verbal symbols “C.A.T.” have no natural connection with cute, fuzzy animals that purr and like to be scratched. The symbols “C.A.T.” have no meaning in other languages (see Figure 1.1).
Nonverbal symbols are arbitrary as well. Showing someone your upright middle finger may not communicate much in some cultures. Verbal and nonverbal symbols are only meaningful to people who have learned to associate them with what they represent. People can allow just about any symbols they want to represent just about anything they want. For example, you and your friends probably communicate with each other using private symbols that no one else understands. You have your own secret code. You have words, phrases, gestures, and handshakes that only you and your friends know, understand, and use. This allows you to communicate with each other with your own “foreign” language. Drug dealers and users, for example, have an elaborate and highly rule-governed language that allows them to communicate about their illegal activities. In drug language, the phrase “blow a spliff” is symbolic code for “smoke a marijuana cigarette.” Any verbal language (e.g., English, Chinese, Russian) is a code made up of symbols. The letters of the English alphabet (e.g., “A, B, C, . . .”) are a set of symbols that represent sounds. When we combine the individual symbols (e.g., “C + A + T”), they become meaningful. By using symbols, people can represent their thoughts and ideas through writing or speaking. Once an idea has been encoded with symbols, it becomes a message. During communication, people encode their thoughts and send them to someone else. The other person listens to the message and translates, or decodes it. When Jose saw Juan, he encoded a greeting. Juan decoded (i.e., translated) the message and encoded a response. Interaction, then, is the process of encoding and decoding messages. People who speak different languages are simply using different codes.

**Dimension 5: Intentional.** Perhaps one of the most debated issues regarding the communication process centers on intentionality. On one side of the debate are those who argue that communication is intentional. On the other side are those who insist that communication can occur unintentionally. **Intentional** communication exists whenever two or more people consciously engage in interaction with some purpose.²⁶ For example, if Kyoko says to Akira, “Hey, do you want to go out to eat tonight?” and Akira responds by saying, “Yeah, that sounds
like a good idea!” intentional communication has surely taken place. Unintentional communication may exist, however. For example, at a party, Kyoko thinks that Akira is consciously ignoring her because he interacts with several other people. Kyoko senses that Akira is consciously sending her a message when, in fact, Akira’s intention is simply to talk with new friends. Akira is not intentionally ignoring Kyoko, but she thinks that he is indeed sending her a message (i.e., a nonverbal message). Since a response has been elicited in Kyoko, some communication scholars argue that communication has occurred. Three interpretations can be drawn from the above discussion. To many communication scholars, intentionality is a central property of the communication process. Others insist that any message interpreted by a person qualifies as communication whether or not the message was intentionally sent. Still others insist that all behavior, intentional or not, is informative and meaningful, and thus is communicative. Thus, whenever a person (e.g., Kyoko in the above example) responds to some stimulus (e.g., Akira talking with other people), communication has occurred. In this book, the type of communication that will be discussed is intentional communication. This book takes the position that intentional communication, either verbal or nonverbal, is more informative than unintentional communication.

**Dimension 6: Contextual.** Communication is dependent on the context in which it occurs. The effects and outcomes, styles and fashions, and the resulting meaning are all dependent on the context in which the communication occurs. In this book, a **context** is the cultural, physical, relational, and perceptual environment in which communication occurs. In many ways, the context defines the meaning of any messages. For example, the context of the classroom defines the kind of communication that will occur. Most students sit quietly while the professor psychologically stimulates them with a brilliant lecture. There are essentially four different kinds of context that influence the process of communication: (a) the cultural and microcultural environment, (b) the physical environment, (c) the sociorelational environment, and (d) the perceptual environment. The cultural context includes all of the factors and influences that make up one’s culture. This context will be discussed in detail in the next section of this chapter. The physiological context is the actual geographical space or territory in which the communication takes place. For example, communication between Juan and Jose will be different when they are interacting on a busy street in a big city compared with when they are in their university library. The sociorelational environment refers to social roles and group memberships (e.g., demographics). Sex, age, religious affiliation, education level, and economic status affect how one communicates and relates with others. Finally, the **perceptual context** includes all of the motivations, intentions, and personality traits people bring to the communication event. When you are interacting with your professor about an examination that you just failed, you have a very different set of motivations and intentions from when you are asking someone out on a date.

**Dimension 7: Ubiquitous.** That communication is ubiquitous simply means that communication is everywhere, done by everyone, all of the time. Humans are constantly bombarded with verbal and nonverbal messages. Wherever one goes, there is some communication happening. In fact, some scholars in the field of communication argue that it is impossible to not communicate. Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin, and Don Jackson have argued that **one cannot**
The logic of their argument is that (a) behavior has no opposite—one cannot not behave; (b) in an interactional setting, all behavior has informational value or message value; it is informative, and since behavior is informative, it is communicative; and (d) if behavior is communicative, and one cannot not behave, then one cannot not communicate.27

**Dimension 8: Cultural.** Culture shapes communication, and communication is culture-bound. People from different cultures communicate differently. The verbal and nonverbal symbols we use to communicate with our friends and families are strongly influenced by our culture. Perhaps the most obvious verbal communication difference between two cultures is language. Even cultures speaking the same language have different meanings for different symbols, however. For example, although English is the dominant language spoken in the United States and England, many words and phrases have different meanings between these two cultures. In England, to “bomb” an examination is to have performed very well. When in London, do not bother to ask for directions to the nearest bathroom or restroom. In England, it is called the “water closet” or the “WC.” Australians also speak English, but have a variety of colloquialisms not well understood by persons from the United States (see Table 1.5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 1.5</strong> Australian Colloquialisms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amber Fluid = beer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bag of Fruit = slang for men’s clothing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barbie = barbeque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bickie = cookie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bottler = expression for a person who performs well</td>
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<tr>
<td>Off = to describe rotten food</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tucker = food</td>
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Culture also has a dramatic effect on nonverbal communication. Nonverbal symbols, gestures, and perceptions of personal space and time vary significantly from culture to culture. In the United States, for example, people generally stand about two-and-a-half feet, or an arm’s length, away from others when communicating. In many Middle Eastern cultures, people stand very close to one another when interacting, especially men (see Figure 1.2). They do this in order to smell each other’s breath. In Saudi Arabia, two men walking together are likely to be holding hands as a sign of trust. Communication, then, is the dynamic process of encoding and decoding verbal and nonverbal messages within a defined cultural, physiological, sociorelational, and perceptual environment. Although many of our messages are sent intentionally, many others, perhaps our nonverbal messages, can unintentionally influence others.
Human Communication Apprehension

Although communication is difficult to define, we know that people begin to communicate at birth and continue communicating throughout their lives. We also know that many people experience fear and anxiety when communicating with others, particularly in situations such as public speaking, class presentations, a first date, or during a job interview. The fear or anxiety people experience when communicating with others is called communication apprehension (CA). In the past 35 years, a substantial body of research has accumulated regarding the nature and prevalence of communication apprehension. Jim McCroskey, considered the father of the communication apprehension concept, argues that nearly everyone experiences some kind of communication apprehension sometimes, but roughly 1 in 5 adults in the United States suffers from communication apprehension virtually whenever they communicate with others. McCroskey argues that experiencing communication apprehension is normal; that is, all of us experience it occasionally, but it can be a problem for us. McCroskey argues that there are four types of communication apprehension: traitlike, context-based, audience-based, and situational. Traitlike communication apprehension is an enduring general personality predisposition where an individual experiences communication apprehension most of the time across most communication situations.
situations. Twenty percent of adults in the United States experience traitlike communication apprehension. Context-based communication apprehension is restricted to a certain generalized context, such as public speaking, group meetings, or job interviews.

Persons with context-based communication apprehension experience anxiety only in certain contexts and not others. Audience-based communication apprehension is triggered not by the specific context, but by the specific person or audience with whom one is communicating. Hence, persons with audience-based communication apprehension experience anxiety when communicating with strangers, or their superiors. College students with audience-based communication apprehension may experience anxiety when communicating with professors, but not when communicating with other students. Finally, situational-based communication apprehension, experienced by virtually everyone, occurs with the combination of a specific context and a specific audience. For example, students may feel anxious interacting with professors only when they are alone with the professor in the professor’s office. At other times, perhaps in the hallways or in the classroom, interacting with the professor may not be a problem. To repeat, virtually everyone experiences communication apprehension at some time. To experience communication apprehension does not mean you are abnormal or sick. What follows is the **Personal Report of Communication Apprehension** (PRCA-24), a scale designed to measure your degree of communication apprehension. Take a few moments and complete the scale.

**Self-Assessment 1.1**

**Personal Report of Communication Apprehension**

**Directions:** This instrument is composed of twenty-four statements concerning your feelings about communicating with other people. Please indicate in the space provided the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) are undecided, (4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree with each statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Many of the statements are similar to other statements. Do not be concerned about this. Work quickly; just record your first impressions.

_____ 1. I dislike participating in group discussions.

_____ 2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.

_____ 3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.

_____ 4. I like to get involved in group discussions.

_____ 5. Engaging in group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.

_____ 6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.

_____ 7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in group discussions.

_____ 8. Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.

_____ 9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.

_____ 10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.

(Continued)
(Continued)

11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
15. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
16. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
17. When conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
18. I am afraid to speak up in conversations.
19. I have no fear of giving a speech.
20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.
21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

**Scoring:** The PRCA-24 allows you to compute a total score and four subscores. The total score represents your degree of traitlike CA. Total scores may range from 24 to 120. McCroskey argues that any score above 72 indicates general CA. Scores above 80 indicate a very high level of CA. Scores below 59 indicate a very low level of CA.

**Total PRCA Score:**

Step 1. Add what you marked for Items 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22, and 24.
Step 2. Add what you marked for Items 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21, and 23.
Step 3. Subtract the score from Step 1 from 84 (i.e., 84 minus the score of Step 1).

Then add the score of Step 2 to that total. The sum is your PRCA score. The subscores indicate your degree of CA across four common contexts: group discussions, meetings, interpersonal conversations, and public speaking. For these scales, a score above 18 is high and a score above 23 is very high.

**Subscores for Contexts:**

Group Subscore: 18 + scores for Items 2, 4, and 6, minus scores for Items 1, 3, and 5.
Meeting Subscore: 18 + scores for Items 8, 9, and 10, minus scores for Items 7, 10, and 11.
Interpersonal Subscore: 18 + scores for Items 14, 16, and 17, minus scores for Items 13, 15, and 18.
Public Speaking Subscore: 18 + scores for Items 19, 21, and 23, minus scores for Items 20, 22, and 24.

**SOURCE:** Copyright James C. McCroskey. Scale used with permission of James C. McCroskey
The Nature of Culture

Like communication, culture is ubiquitous and has a profound effect on humans. Culture is simultaneously invisible yet pervasive. As we go about our daily lives, we are not overtly conscious of our culture’s influence on us. How often have you sat in your dorm room or classroom, for example, and consciously thought about what it means to be an American? As you stand in the lunch line, do you say to yourself, “I am acting like an American”? As you sit in your classroom, do you say to yourself, “The professor is really acting like an American”? Yet most of your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are culturally driven. One need only step into a culture different from one’s own to feel the immense impact of culture.

Culture has a direct influence on the physical, relational, and perceptual environment. For example, the next time you enter your communication classroom, consider how the room is arranged physically, including where you sit and where the professor teaches, the location of the chalkboard, windows, and so on. Does the professor lecture from behind a podium? Do the students sit facing the professor? Is the chalkboard used? Next, think about your relationship with the professor and the other students in your class. Is the relationship formal or informal? Do you interact with the professor and students about topics other than class material? Would you consider the relationship personal or impersonal? Finally, think about your perceptual disposition; that is, your attitudes, motivations, and emotions about the class. Are you happy to be in the class? Do you enjoy attending? Are you nervous when the instructor asks you a question? To a great extent, the answers to these questions are contingent on your culture. The physical arrangement of classrooms, the social relationship between students and teachers, and the perceptual profiles of the students and teachers vary significantly from culture to culture.

Like communication, culture is difficult to define. Australian anthropologist Roger Keesing argues that culture does not have some true and sacred and eternal meaning we are trying to discover, but that like other symbols, it means whatever we use it to mean; and that as with other analytical concepts, human users must carve out—and try to partly agree on—a class of natural phenomena they can most strategically label.29 Just about everyone has his or her own definition of culture. To be sure, over 50 years ago two well-known anthropologists, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, found and examined 300 definitions of culture, no two of which were the same.30 Perhaps too often people think of culture only in terms of the fine arts, geography, or history. Small towns or rural communities are often accused of having no culture. Yet culture exists everywhere. There is as much culture in Willard, New Mexico (population 240), as there is in New York City, New York (population 8,143,197). The two cultures are simply different. Simply put, culture is people.

Although there may not be a universally accepted definition of culture, there are a number of properties of culture that most people would agree describe its essence. In this book, culture is defined as an accumulated pattern of values, beliefs, and behaviors, shared by an identifiable group of people with a common history and verbal and nonverbal symbol systems.

Accumulated Pattern of Values, Beliefs, and Behaviors

Cultures can be defined by their value and belief systems and by the actions of their members. People who exist in the same culture generally share similar values and beliefs (see Table 1.6). In the United States, for example, individuality is highly valued. An individual’s
self-interest takes precedence over group interests. Americans believe that people are unique. Moreover, Americans value personal independence. Conversely, in Japan, a collectivist and homogeneous culture, a sense of groupness and group harmony is valued. Most Japanese see themselves as members of a group first, as individuals second. Where Americans value independence, Japanese value interdependence. The values of a particular culture lead to a set of expectations and rules prescribing how people should behave in that culture. Although many Americans prefer to think of themselves as unique individuals, most Americans behave in similar ways. Observe the students around you in your classes. Although you may prefer to think that you are very different from your peers, you are really quite similar to them. Most of your peers follow a very similar behavioral pattern to your own. For example, on a day-to-day basis, most of your peers attend classes, take examinations, go to lunch, study, party, and write papers.

Americans share a similar behavioral profile. Most Americans work an average of 40 hours a week, receive some form of payment for their work, and pay some of their earnings in taxes. Most Americans spend their money on homes and cars. Almost every home in the United States has a television. Although Americans view themselves as unique individuals, most of them have very similar behavioral patterns.

**An Identifiable Group of People With a Common History**

Because the members of a particular culture share similar values, beliefs, and behaviors, they are identifiable as a distinct group. In addition to their shared values, beliefs, and behaviors, the members of a particular culture share a common history. Any culture’s past inextricably binds it to the present and guides its future. At the core of any culture are traditions that are passed on to future generations (see Figure 1.3). In many cultures, history is a major component of the formal and informal education systems. To learn a culture’s history is to learn that culture’s values. One way that children in the United States develop their sense of independence, for example, is by learning about the Declaration of Independence, one

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Table 1.6</strong> Values Across Cultures</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saudi Arabia</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>India</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Lineage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supernatural Guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Inequality</td>
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of this country’s most sacred documents. Elementary school children in Iran, for example, learn of the historical significance regarding the political and religious revolution that took place in their culture in the 1970s and 1980s. Russian children are taught about the arts in Russian history. Russian children are taught about famous Russian composers, including Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, and Stravinsky. The art of the past helps Russians remember their culture and history as they face disruptive social and political crises. Such historical lessons are the glue that binds people.31

**Verbal and Nonverbal Symbol Systems**

One of the most important elements of any culture is its communication system. The verbal and nonverbal symbols with which the members of a culture communicate are culture-bound. To see the difference between the verbal codes of any two cultures is easy. The dominant verbal code in the United States is English, whereas the dominant verbal code in Mexico is Spanish. But although two cultures may share the same verbal code, they may have dramatically different verbal styles. Most White Americans, for example, use a very
direct, instrumental, personal style when speaking English. Many Native Americans who also speak English use an indirect, impersonal style and may prefer the use of silence as opposed to words. Nonverbal code systems vary significantly across cultures as well. Nonverbal communication includes the use of body language, gestures, facial expressions, voice, smell, personal and geographical space, time, and artifacts (see Figure 1.4). Body language can communicate a great deal about one’s culture. When adults interact with young children in the United States, for example, it is not uncommon for the adult to pat the head of the child. This nonverbal gesture is often seen as a form of endearment and is culturally acceptable. In Thailand, however, where the head is considered the seat of the soul, such a gesture is unacceptable. Belching during or after a meal is viewed by most Americans as rude and impolite, perhaps even disgusting. But in parts of Korea and the Middle East, belching after a meal might be interpreted as a compliment to the cook.

People communicate nonverbally through smell also. Americans, in particular, seem obsessed with the smell of the human body and home environment. Think of all of the
products you used this morning before you left for class that were designed to mask the natural scent of your body, including soap, toothpaste, mouthwash, deodorant, and cologne and/or perfume. Persons from other cultures often complain that Americans tend to smell antiseptic.

**Microcultural Groups**

Within most cultures, groups of people, or microcultures, coexist within the mainstream society. Microcultures exist within the broader rules and guidelines of the dominant cultural milieu but are distinct in some way, perhaps racially, linguistically, or via their sexual orientation, age, or even occupation. In some ways, everyone is a member of some microcultural group. Microcultures often may have histories that differ from the dominant cultural group. In many cases microcultural groups are subordinate in some way, perhaps politically or economically.

In the United States, Native American tribes might be considered microcultures. For example, in addition to their formal education provided by the larger culture, Navaho children informally learn their microculture’s history by hearing the traditions of their people. The Amish of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, can be considered a microcultural group. Although the Amish are subject to most of the same laws as any other group of citizens, they have unique values and communication systems that differentiate them from mainstream American life. For example, Amish children are exempt from compulsory attendance in public schools after eighth grade. Although almost all Amish speak English, when they interact among themselves they speak German. During church services, a form of High German is used. Hence, most Amish of Lancaster County speak three languages.

**A Contextual Model of Intercultural Communication**

*Intercultural communication* occurs whenever a minimum of two persons from different cultures or microcultures come together and exchange verbal and nonverbal symbols. A central theme throughout this book is that intercultural communication is contextual. A contextual model of intercultural communication is presented in Figure 1.5. According to the model, intercultural communication occurs within and between a variety of interconnected contexts, including cultural, microcultural, environmental, perceptual, and sociorelational contexts.

The term *context* refers to the setting, situation, circumstances, background, and overall framework within which communication occurs. For example, when you interact with your friends, you interact in some physical context, such as your dorm room. You also interact within a social context, that is, friend to friend. You also interact within a psychological context—your thoughts and emotions about your friend. The contextual model of intercultural communication attempts to identify the various contexts that define what happens when a person from Culture A communicates with a person from Culture B. As we walk through the contextual model of intercultural communication, please note the model is both conceptually and graphically consistent.

The largest, outer circle of the model represents the cultural context. All communicative exchanges between persons occur within some culture. The cultural context represents an
accumulated pattern of values, beliefs, and behaviors, shared by an identifiable group of people with a common history and verbal and nonverbal symbol systems. So, whenever you and someone from a different culture come together and interact, you are within a cultural context. In this textbook, the cultural context is the focus of Chapter 2.

The next largest circle in the model is the microcultural context (Figure 1.6). As mentioned earlier, within most cultures, separate groups of people coexist. These groups, called microcultures, are in some way different from the larger cultural milieu. Sometimes the difference is via ethnicity, race, or language. Conceptually, microcultures exist within a larger culture, and notice that graphically in the model, the microculture is within the cultural context. Often, microcultures are treated differently by the members of the larger culture. Some people refer to microcultural groups as minority groups or subcultures. But those terms will not be used here. Microcultures are the focus of Chapter 3.

The next largest circle in the model is the environmental context (Figure 1.7). This circle represents the physical, geographical location of the interaction. While culture prescribes the overall rules for communication, the physical location indicates when and where the specific rules apply. For example, in the United States there are rules about yelling. Depending on the physical location, yelling can be prohibited or encouraged. In a church, yelling is generally prohibited, whereas at a football game yelling is the preferred method of communicating. The environmental context includes the physical geography, architecture, landscape design, and even the climate of a particular culture. All of these environmental factors play a key role in how people communicate. Graphically, in the model, the
environmental context is within the microcultural and cultural contexts. Conceptually, this is because one’s culture and membership in microcultural groups significantly influence how one perceives the environment. For example, temperatures below 32 degrees (i.e., freezing) are not thought of as extreme to a person raised in International Falls, Minnesota. But to a person raised in Tucson, Arizona, they may seem unbearable. In this book, the environmental context is discussed in Chapter 4.
The two circles within the environmental context represent the perceptual context(s) (Figure 1.8). The perceptual context refers to the individual characteristics of each interactant, including their cognitions, attitudes, dispositions, and motivations. Specifically, the perceptual context refers to how an individual gathers, stores, and retrieves information. Humans gather information via their senses, that is, through sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell. We then store the information in our memories and retrieve it for later use. Although the ability to gather, store, and retrieve information is fundamentally human, it is also affected by culture. Many of the attitudes, beliefs, and values that you hold were taught to you by your culture. What smells good to you is cultural, for example. The music you listen to is also largely a cultural by-product. Moreover, how an individual develops attitudes about others, including stereotypes, varies from culture to culture, too. The perceptual context is the emphasis of Chapter 5.

The circles connecting the perceptual contexts in the model form the sociorelational context (Figure 1.9). This refers to the relationship between the interactants. Whenever two people come together and interact, they establish a relationship. Within this relationship, each person assumes a role. Right now, you are assuming the role of student. The person teaching your communication class is assuming the role of teacher. So, in a very real sense, you are having a relationship with your teacher, that is, a student–teacher relationship. Roles prescribe how people should behave. Most of the people with whom you interact are related to you via your role as student. The reason you interact with so many professors is because you are a student. What you interact about, that is, the topic of your interaction, is also defined by your role as student. You and your professors interact about courses. How you interact with your professor, that is, the style of talk (e.g., polite language), is also prescribed by your role as student. The language and style of your talk with your professor is probably very different from the language and style of talk you use when you go back to your dorm room and interact with your friends. Probably the last 10 people with whom you interacted were directly related to you via your role as student. When you go back to your hometown during semester break and step into the role of son/daughter or brother/sister, you are assuming a different role and your interaction changes accordingly. Your interaction varies as a function of what role you are assuming.
Roles vary from culture to culture. Although in just about every culture there are student and teacher role relationships, how those roles are defined varies significantly. What it means to be a student in the United States is very different from what it means to be a student in Japan. In Japan, for example, many students go to school six days a week. Japanese teachers are highly respected and play a very influential role in the Japanese student’s life. What it means to be a mother or father varies considerably from one culture to another. In the Masai culture of Kenya, a woman is defined by her fertility. To be defined as a mother in Masai culture, a woman must endure circumcision (i.e., clitoridectomy), an arranged marriage, and wife-beating. Conceptually, people (i.e., perceptual contexts) are connected to one another via their relationships. Graphically, the model shows this connection via the sociorelational context. The sociorelational context links the two perceptual contexts. One’s roles prescribe the types of verbal and nonverbal symbols that are exchanged. In this book, the sociorelational context and role relationships are the focus of Chapter 6.

All of our relationships are defined by the verbal and nonverbal messages we send to our relational partners. What differentiates one relationship from another is the verbal and nonverbal things we do to each other. What differentiates your relationship with your teacher from your relationship with your best friend is the verbal and nonverbal things you do with each other. Notice that in the contextual model, the sociorelational context is graphically represented by two circles labeled nonverbal and verbal messages. Again, the verbal and nonverbal messages define the relationship, and the relationship connects the perceptual contexts.

The nonverbal circle is the larger of the two and is represented by a continuous line. The verbal circle is smaller and is represented as a series of dashes in the shape of a circle.
nonverbal message circle is larger than the verbal message circle because the majority of our communicative behavior is nonverbal. Whether we are using words or not, we are communicating nonverbally through eye contact, body stance, and space. In addition, our nonverbal behavior is ongoing; we cannot not behave. The verbal message circle is a series of dashes in the shape of a circle to represent the digital quality of verbal communication. By digital, we mean that, unlike our nonverbal communication, our verbal communication is made up of words that have recognizable and discrete beginning and ending points. A word is like a digit. We can start and stop talking with words. Our nonverbal behavior goes on continuously, however. Chapter 7 concentrates on verbal communication codes, and Chapter 8 centers on nonverbal codes.

The general theme of this book, as represented in the model, is that intercultural communication is defined by the interdependence of these various contexts. The perceptual contexts combine to create the sociorelational context, which is defined by the verbal and nonverbal messages sent. The sociorelational context is influenced by the environmental context and defined by the microcultural and cultural contexts. These contexts combine in a complex formula to create the phenomenon of intercultural communication.

Intercultural Communication and Uncertainty

When we interact with someone from a different culture we are faced with a lot of uncertainty. We may not know anything about the person’s culture, values, habits, behavior, dress, and so on. We may not know what to say or do in such circumstances. This uncertainty about the other person may make us feel nervous and anxious. Communication theorist Charles Berger contends that the task of interacting with someone from a different culture who may look, act, and communicate differently presents the intercultural communicator with some very complex predictive and explanatory problems. To some extent, to effectively interact with someone from a different culture, we must be able to predict how our interaction partner is likely to behave and, based on those predictions, select our appropriate verbal and nonverbal messages.

Berger theorizes that whenever we come together and interact with a stranger, our primary concern is to reduce uncertainty, especially when the other person is someone with whom we will interact again. Often, when we are faced with high levels of uncertainty, we experience anxiety. In high-uncertainty situations, our primary goal is to reduce uncertainty and to increase the predictability about the other. This can be accomplished via specific verbal and nonverbal communication strategies such as question asking and appropriate nonverbal expressiveness.

Some types of communication situations may be more anxiety producing than others. For example, Buss argues that situations that are novel, unfamiliar, or dissimilar lead to increased anxiety. Those situations containing new, atypical, or conspicuously different stimuli are likely to increase our sense of anxiety. Based on these criteria, initial interaction with someone, or interacting with someone from a different culture, may produce heightened anxiety.

Intercultural communication experts William Gudykunst and Young Kim argue that when we interact with people from different cultures, we tend to view them as strangers. Strangers are unknown people who are members of different groups. Anyone entering a relatively
unknown or unfamiliar environment falls under the rubric of stranger. Interaction with people from different cultures tends to involve the highest degree of “strangerness” and the lowest degree of familiarity. Thus, there is greater uncertainty in initial interaction with strangers than with people with whom we are familiar. According to Gudykunst and Kim, actual or anticipated interaction with members of different groups (e.g., cultures or ethnic groups different from our own) leads to anxiety. If we are too anxious about interacting with strangers, we tend to avoid them. Communication researchers Jim Neuliep and Jim McCroskey state that this type of communication anxiety can be labeled **intercultural communication apprehension**: that is, the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated interaction with people from different groups, especially different cultural or ethnic groups.

### Intercultural Communication Apprehension

Successfully interacting with someone from a different culture requires a degree of communication competence. According to Brian Spitzberg, most models of communication competence include cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. The cognitive component refers to how much one knows about communication. The affective component includes one’s motivation to approach or avoid communication. The behavioral component refers to the skills one has to interact competently. An interculturally competent communicator is *motivated* to communicate, *knowledgeable* about how to communicate, and *skilled* in communicating. In addition, an interculturally competent communicator is *sensitive* to the expectations of the context in which communication occurs. Competent communicators interact effectively by adapting messages appropriately to the context. Competent communicators understand the rules, norms, and expectations of the relationship and do not significantly violate them. Communicators are effective to the degree that their goals are accomplished successfully.

According to Neuliep and McCroskey, a person’s affective orientation toward intercultural communication involves the individual’s degree of motivation to approach or avoid a given intercultural context or person. Communication studies indicate that at least 20% of the United States adult population experiences high levels of fear or anxiety even when communicating with members of their own culture. Other studies indicate that 99% of Americans experience communication apprehension at some time in their lives, perhaps during a job interview, a first date, and so on. One outcome of communication apprehension is to avoid communication. When people feel anxious about communicating with others, they tend to avoid such situations.

Given that intercultural communication may be more anxiety producing than other forms of communication, the number of people suffering from intercultural communication apprehension (ICA) may be considerable. Identifying such individuals may be the first step toward more effective and successful intercultural communication. Self-Assessment 1.2 is an instrument called the Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (PRICA). This scale was developed by communication researchers Neuliep and McCroskey. The PRICA is very similar to the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) that you completed earlier in this chapter. The difference between these two scales is that the PRICA assesses your degree of apprehension about communicating with someone from a culture different from yours. After completing each scale, you can compare your scores.
The PRICA Instrument is composed of 14 statements concerning your feelings about communication with people from other cultures. Please indicate in the space provided the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) are undecided, (4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree with each statement. There are no right or wrong answers, and many of the statements are designed to be similar to other statements. Do not be concerned about this. Work quickly and record your first impressions. That you respond to these statements as honestly as possible is very important; otherwise, your score will not be valid.

**Self-Assessment 1.2**

**Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension**

(1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) undecided, (4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree

1. Generally, I am comfortable interacting with a group of people from different cultures.
2. I am tense and nervous while interacting in group discussions with people from different cultures.
3. I like to get involved in group discussions with others who are from different cultures.
4. Engaging in a group discussion with people from different cultures makes me tense and nervous.
5. I am calm and relaxed when interacting with a group of people who are from different cultures.
6. While participating in a conversation with a person from a different culture I feel very nervous.
7. I have no fear of speaking up in a conversation with a person from a different culture.
8. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations with a person from a different culture.
9. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations with a person from a different culture.
10. While conversing with a person from a different culture, I feel very relaxed.
11. I’m afraid to speak up in conversations with a person from a different culture.
12. I face the prospect of interacting with people from different cultures with confidence.
13. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when interacting with people from different cultures.
14. Communicating with people from different cultures makes me feel uncomfortable.

**Scoring:** To score the instrument, reverse your original response for Items 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, and 14. For example, for each of these items 1 = 5, 2 = 4, 3 = 3, 4 = 2, and 5 = 1. If your original score for Item 2 was 1, change it to a 5. If your original score for Item 4 was a 2, change it to a 4, and so on. After reversing the score for these seven items, sum all 14 items. Scores cannot be higher than 70 or lower than 14. Higher scores (e.g., 50–70) indicate high intercultural communication apprehension. Low scores (e.g., 14–28) indicate low intercultural communication apprehension.
To the degree to which you answered the items honestly, your score is a fairly reliable and valid assessment of your motivation to approach or avoid intercultural communication. Spitzberg argues that as your motivation increases, so does your confidence. As confidence increases, intercultural communication competence also is likely to increase. People who are nervous and tense about interacting with people from different cultures are less likely to approach intercultural communication situations and probably are not confident about encountering new people from different cultures.

**FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

A central premise of this book is that intercultural communication is a complex combination of the cultural, microcultural, environmental, perceptual, and sociorelational contexts between two people who are encoding and decoding verbal and nonverbal messages. Because of the complexity of this process, a fundamental assumption about intercultural communication is that, during intercultural communication, the message sent is usually not the message received.

**Assumption #1:** During intercultural communication, the message sent is usually not the message received. Whenever people from different cultures come together and exchange messages, they bring with them a whole host of thoughts, values, emotions, and behaviors that were planted and cultivated by culture. As we have said, intercultural communication is a symbolic activity where the thoughts and ideas of one are encoded into a verbal or nonverbal message format, and then transmitted through some channel to another person who must decode it, interpret it, and respond to it. This process of encoding, decoding, and interpreting is filled with cultural noise. Noted intercultural communication scholar William Gudykunst has noted that during intercultural communication, culture acts as a filter through which all messages, both verbal and nonverbal, must pass. To this extent, all intercultural exchanges are necessarily, to a greater or lesser extent, charged with ethnocentrism. Hence, during intercultural communication, the message sent is not the message received.

**Ethnocentrism** refers to the idea that one’s own culture is the center of everything, and all other groups (or cultures) are scaled and rated with reference to it. Sociologist W. G. Sumner argued that ethnocentrism nourishes a group’s pride and vanity while looking on outsiders, or outgroups, with contempt. Although culture may mediate the extent to which we experience it, ethnocentrism is thought to be universal. One of the effects of ethnocentrism is that it clouds our perception of others. We have a tendency to judge others, and their communication, based on the standards set by our own culture. Neuliep and McCroskey have argued that the concept of ethnocentrism is essentially descriptive, and not necessarily pejorative. Ethnocentrism may serve a very valuable function when one’s ingroup is under attack or threatened. Moreover, ethnocentrism forms the basis for patriotism, group loyalty, and the willingness to sacrifice for one’s own group. To be sure, however, ethnocentrism can be problematic. In not looking past their own culture, people see little importance in understanding other cultures. At high levels, ethnocentrism is an obstacle to effective intercultural communication.
Neuliep and McCroskey have developed the GENE Scale, which is designed to measure ethnocentrism. The GENE Scale and the directions for completing it are presented below.

**Self-Assessment 1.3**

**GENE Scale**

**Directions:** The GENE Scale is composed of 22 statements concerning your feelings about your culture and other cultures. In the space provided to the left of each item, indicate the degree to which the statement applies to you by marking whether you (5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) are neutral, (2) disagree, or (1) strongly disagree with the statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Some of the statements are similar. Remember, everyone experiences some degree of ethnocentrism. Fortunately, as we will see in Chapter 5, ethnocentrism can be managed and reduced. Be honest! Work quickly and record your first response.

- 1. Most other cultures are backward compared to my culture.
- 2. My culture should be the role model for other cultures.
- 3. People from other cultures act strange when they come into my culture.
- 4. Lifestyles in other cultures are just as valid as those in my culture.
- 5. Other cultures should try to be more like my culture.
- 6. I'm not interested in the values and customs of other cultures.
- 7. People in my culture could learn a lot from people of other cultures.
- 8. Most people from other cultures just don't know what's good for them.
- 9. I respect the values and customs of other cultures.
- 10. Other cultures are smart to look up to our culture.
- 11. Most people would be happier if they lived like people in my culture.
- 12. I have many friends from other cultures.
- 13. People in my culture have just about the best lifestyles of anywhere.
- 14. Lifestyles in other cultures are not as valid as those in my culture.
- 15. I'm very interested in the values and customs of other cultures.
- 16. I apply my values when judging people who are different.
- 17. I see people who are similar to me as virtuous.
- 18. I do not cooperate with people who are different.
- 19. Most people in my culture just don't know what is good for them.
- 20. I do not trust people who are different.
- 21. I dislike interacting with people from different cultures.
- 22. I have little respect for the values and customs of other cultures.
Assumption #2: Intercultural communication is primarily a nonverbal act between people. Some foreign language teachers might have us believe that competency in a foreign language is tantamount to effective and successful intercultural communication in the culture that speaks that language. To be sure, proficiency in a foreign language expedites the intercultural communication experience. But intercultural communication is primarily and fundamentally a nonverbal process. The expression of intimacy, power, and status among communicators is typically accomplished nonverbally through paralinguistic cues, proxemics, haptics, oculistics, and olfactics. In Korea, for example, one’s hierarchical position is displayed via vocal tone and pitch. When a subordinate takes receipt of an important piece of paper, such as a graded exam from a respected professor, the student grasps it with both hands (not just one), accompanied with a slight nod of the head, and indirect eye contact—all nonverbal signs of deference.

The well-known anthropologist Edward Hall has argued that people from different cultures live in different sensory worlds. Hall claims that people from different cultures engage in a selective screening of sensory information that ultimately leads to different perceptions of experience. Regarding olfactics (smell), most cultures establish norms for acceptable and unacceptable scents associated with the human body. When people fail to fit into the realm of olfactory cultural acceptability, their odor signals others that something is wrong with their physical, emotional, or mental health. In the United States, we are obsessed with masking certain smells, especially those of the human body. In Western and Westernized cultures, body odor is regarded as unpleasant and distasteful, and great efforts are expended in its removal. Many Muslims believe that cleanliness of the body and purity of the soul are related. Muslim women are told to purify themselves after menstruation. Cleanliness is prescribed before and after meals. As we will see in Chapter 8, our nonverbal messages complement, augment, accent, substitute for, and repeat our verbal messages.

Assumption #3: Intercultural communication necessarily involves a clash of communicator style. In the United States, talk is a highly valued commodity. People are routinely evaluated by their speech. Yet silence—that is, knowing when not to speak—is a fundamental prerequisite for linguistic and cultural competence. The use and interpretation of silence varies dramatically across cultures. In many collectivistic cultures, such as Japan and Korea, silence can carry more meaning than words, especially in the maintenance of intimate relationships. In fact, the Japanese, and some Native American tribes in the United States, believe that the expression of relational intimacy is best accomplished nonverbally. They believe that having to put one’s thoughts and emotions into words somehow cheapens and discounts them.
In the United States we value, and employ, a very direct and personal style of verbal communication. Personal pronouns are an essential ingredient to the composition of just about any utterance. Our motto is “Get to the point,” “Don’t beat around the bush,” “Tell it like it is,” “Speak your mind.” Many cultures, however, prefer an indirect and impersonal communication style. In these cultures, there is no need to articulate every message. True understanding is implicit, coming not from words but from actions in the environment where speakers provide only hints or insinuations. The Chinese say, “One should use the eyes and ears, not the mouth,” and “Disaster emanates from careless talk.” The Chinese consider the wisest and most trustworthy person to be the one who talks the least but who listens, watches, and restricts his or her verbal communication.\textsuperscript{51}

**Assumption #4: Intercultural communication is a group phenomenon experienced by individuals.** Whenever we interact with a person from a different culture, we carry with us assumptions and impressions of that other person. The specific verbal and nonverbal messages that we exchange are usually tailored for the person based on those assumptions and impressions. Often, such assumptions and impressions are based on characteristics of the other person by virtue of his or her membership in groups such as his or her culture, race, sex, age, and occupation group. In other words, we have a tendency to see others not as individuals with unique thoughts, ideas, and goals, but rather as “an Asian,” or “a woman,” or “an old person,” or “a cab driver.” In other words, we do not see the person—we see the groups to which the person belongs. The problem with this is that group data may not be a reliable source upon which to construct our messages. Because someone belongs to a specific racial, ethnic, sex, or age group does not necessarily mean that he or she takes on the thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes associated with such groups. Thus, the potential for miscommunication is great. During intercultural communication, we have to be mindful that while the person with whom we are interacting is from a different cultural group, he or she is also an individual. Only through intercultural communication can we ever get to know the person as an individual.

**Assumption #5: Intercultural communication is a cycle of stress and adaptation.** As mentioned earlier in this chapter, when we come together with a person from a different culture, we may feel uncertain, apprehensive, and anxious. Such feelings are stressful. Hence, sometimes intercultural communication can be stressful. The good news is that we can learn and adapt to such stress and eventually grow. During intercultural communication, we have to be mindful that the communication strategies we use with persons with whom we are familiar may not be effective with persons from other cultures. Thus, we have to learn to adapt and adjust our communication style. We have to recognize that we will make mistakes, learn from them, adapt, and move on. A good beginning point is to recognize that people from different cultures are different—not better or worse, but simply different. Once we are able to do this, we can adjust and adapt our verbal and nonverbal messages accordingly and become competent interactants.

**CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The purpose of this chapter was to emphasize the necessity of intercultural communication and to define and clarify the terms communication and culture. The first part of this
chapter argued that recent technological, political, and sociological advancements have created a global village only dreamed about 20 years ago. While the dream of a global village holds great promise, the reality is that diverse people have diverse opinions, values, and beliefs that clash and too often result in violence. Only though intercultural communication can such conflict be managed and reduced. The second part of this chapter offered some definitions of communication and culture. Both terms are difficult to define. Communication involves the simultaneous encoding and decoding of verbal and nonverbal messages with someone else within some context. Culture, in part, can be defined as an accumulated pattern of values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by an identifiable group of people with a common history and verbal and nonverbal symbol system. Intercultural communication is essentially contextual. The cultural, microcultural, and environmental contexts surround the communicators, whose sociorelational context is defined by the exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages that are encoded and decoded within each interactant’s perceptual context. The final part of this chapter lets you discover something about yourself; in this case, your intercultural communication apprehension. Competent intercultural communicators are willing to approach intercultural situations and are sensitive to the differences in them.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. In what ways is the United States changing demographically? What will the population look like in 50 years?
2. Why are so many people afraid of communication?
3. Why are so many people afraid to communicate with people from cultures different from their own?
4. Using the definition of culture presented in this chapter, how would you describe your culture?
5. How do the various contexts of the contextual model of intercultural communication relate to each other?
6. Why is it that “the message sent is rarely the message received”?

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

*Communication apprehension:* The fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or group of persons.

*Communication:* The simultaneous encoding, decoding, and interpretation of verbal and nonverbal messages between people.

*Context:* The cultural, physical, social, and psychological environment.

*Culture:* An accumulated pattern of values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by an identifiable group of people with a common history and verbal and nonverbal symbol system.

*Dynamic:* Something considered active and forceful.
**Environmental context:** The physical, geographical location of communication.

**Ethnocentrism:** The tendency to place one’s own group (cultural, ethnic, or religious) in a position of centrality and worth, and to create negative attitudes and behaviors toward other groups.

**GENE:** Self-report instrument designed to measure generalized ethnocentrism.

**Intentionality:** During communication, the voluntary and conscious encoding and decoding of messages.

**Interactive:** A process between two people.

**Intercultural communication:** Two persons from different cultures or co-cultures exchanging verbal and nonverbal messages.

**Intercultural communication apprehension (ICA):** The fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with a person from another culture or co-culture.

**Microculture:** An identifiable group of people coexisting within some dominant cultural context.

**Perceptual context:** The attitudes, emotions, and motivations of the persons engaged in communication and how they affect information processing.

**Personal report of communication apprehension (PRCA):** Self-report instrument designed to measure communication apprehension.

**Process:** Anything ongoing, ever-changing, and continuous.

**Sociorelational context:** The role relationship between the interactants (i.e., brother/sister).

**Symbol:** An arbitrarily selected and learned stimulus representing something else.

**Transactional:** The simultaneous encoding and decoding process during communication.

**Uncertainty:** The amount of unpredictability during communication.

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44. Neuliep & McCroskey, “The Development of Intercultural and Interethnic Communication Apprehension Scales.”


