

Weekly Reflection #2

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## **Chapter 2**

Culture is a word that is often encountered in our modern world where many different types of people are able to interact on a daily basis. According to the work of communication scholars, culture is not just a vague concept: it has a very specific definition. “For our purposes we will define culture as the system of learned and shared symbols, language, values, and norms that distinguish one group from another.” (Floyd, 2021, p. 35) One of the reasons developing an understanding of culture is so important to communication is that according to Floyd (2021, p. 15) the actual words we use to communicate are themselves symbols and therefore culturally dependent. In addition to language and symbols having a direct effect on communication, cultural values and norms are important in defining the context in which communication occurs and is thus interpreted according to the interaction model (Floyd, 2021, pp 10-11). Communication scholars describe a group of people with the same culture as a society (Floyd, 2021, p. 35). Furthermore, co-cultures are smaller groups within a society whose members share elements of the four components of culture. These groups share such traits with one another but not other members of their society (Floyd, 2021, pp. 39-40). Individuals can and usually do belong to more than one co-culture (Floyd, 2021, p. 41).

I personally identify with many co-cultures. One of those that is most important to me is the co-culture of serious kayakers. I began to identify with this co-culture when I became a certified kayak instructor. Before this event I enjoyed kayaking, but was not fully indoctrinated in the symbols, language, values, and norms of this group. One of the interesting symbols I have noticed among this group is that many kayakers, myself included, have roof racks on their cars and prominently display their boat-carrying equipment even when it is not in use. This is partly for convenience of not having to remove and store a large piece of equipment, but it also serves to help members of the co-culture determine group membership. Communication is of vital importance in this co-culture because one’s

safety and that of their fellow paddlers depends on effectively exchanging information about hazards in and around the water. Values and norms of safety, such as wearing a life jacket and being prepared to help others who are in distress, are also part of this culture which distinguish it from other people who enjoy time on the water like intoxicated motor boat operators.

Another co-culture I belong to is that of college students. While coming from a wide array of backgrounds, students at a particular college are often united by things such as language. They often refer to professors just by their last name, or have nicknames for various important locations on campus. They also make use of shared symbols with items such as sweatshirts bearing their school's logo. This co-culture is interesting in that it is transitory, that is no individual will be a college student permanently. People who thrive in this academic setting can go on to become teachers or administrators, these are separate co-cultures that all in turn belong to the larger co-culture of academia. This illustrates the principle described by Floyd (2021, p. 41) that a co-culture can have sub-cultures within it. Conversely, I am also part of the co-culture of St. Louisans. When living in different parts of the country the language I grew up using was often slightly different than the regional dialect, which allowed locals to easily identify that I had not grown up there. This can also be seen when people who are not members of the St. Louis culture come to our city with what others consider strange pronunciations of street names like Gravois and Spoede. One interesting norm of St. Louis and Midwestern culture in general that has been lampooned on the internet in recent years is extended goodbyes.

Word Count: 651

### **Chapter 3**

According to communication scholars self-disclosure is an important part of interpersonal relationships in which we give honest information we believe a communication partner unaware of; this disclosure can be deeply intimate or shallow, casual interaction (Floyd, 2021, p. 96). Social Penetration Theory describes self-disclosure and its effects on communication in more depth. Floyd (2021, p. 97) states that Social Penetration Theory compares self-disclosure in communication to peeling an onion. With increasingly deep informational transactions, communication partners get closer to one another and a bond of trust grows between them. This comparison is apt because the process is not linear and must take both the breadth and depth of the information into account, also the type of relationship affects how much disclosure is appropriate (Floyd, 2021, pp. 97-99). Cultural context is also important in determining the breadth and depth of sharing, for example high-context cultures value social harmony so might be less comfortable sharing disturbing personal information (Floyd, 2021, p. 44).

Of course with such a complex aspect of human relationships, there are many real and serious risks associated with too much disclosure. From the text (Floyd, 2021, pp. 103-104) we see these risks are classified as follows: rejection, chance of obligating others, hurt to others, and violation of others' privacy. It is important to note that the majority of these involve negative effects to the other person and not the over-sharer themselves. Perhaps this is a reason that it is so common to encounter this behavior. One recent memory of such a person was on a group hike I attended on New Years Day. I will refer to this person as Jane Doe. Jane was assigned to ride in our car and the conversation started off normally, but she began dominating the conversation and telling what I considered to be irrelevant stories with excessive details. In the interest of being polite I felt obligated to listen, which is what I would point out to some one when giving them advice about oversharing. Her excessive sharing also

extended to personal details of other people's lives. None of the information was damaging in this situation, but in some circumstances this could be a serious personal or even legal violation. I would certainly also make this a point when discussing the dangers of too much disclosure. For example, personal information from a third party over-sharer that caused some one to loose a job could be cause for legal action. Unwanted disclosure of past relationships to friend's romantic partner could cause serious problems in the current relationship.

After reading about the formal study of communication I realized that this individual also asked many overly personal questions so it is likely that they were brought up in with different cultural expectations of sharing. This illustrates the importance of studying communication: different people need to be able to interact comfortable without falling into some of the many dangers of excessive disclosure. By defining and explaining the possible harm of such disclosure as well as facilitating an understanding of different cultures' values and norms about sharing we can improve communication in a multicultural world.

Word Count: 517