Reading Between the Signs

WORKBOOK

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A Cultural Guide for Sign Language Students and Interpreters

Anna Mindess

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For my daughter Lila,
to further her journey on the intercultural path.

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SECTION

I

INTRODUCTION: UNPACKING YOUR CULTURAL BAGGAGE

> The real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own…all one ever gets from studying foreign culture is a token understanding. The ultimate reason for such study is to learn more about how one's own system works.
>
> —Edward T. Hall
> *The Silent Language*

Each of us carries around a type of "baggage" that cannot be checked at the airport. Because it is invisible, we may not even be aware of its existence. What does this set of hidden luggage contain? Our cultural inheritance of values, attitudes, and beliefs, which, although we may not want to admit it, still influences our daily behavior and the way we interact with others. Stopping to "unpack" and examine the contents of this baggage will not only make us more culturally sensitive interpreters and sign language students but may also improve our dealings with many others who carry around their own sets of cultural bags.

In 1999, *Reading Between the Signs: Intercultural Communication for Sign Language Interpreters* was published. I am humbly gratified to say that it has been widely adopted as a textbook, not only in interpreter preparation programs but in American Sign Language (ASL) and Deaf culture classes as well. Since that time, I have presented many workshops on the material it covers, either alone or in collaboration with my esteemed Deaf colleagues and consultants on the book, Dr. Thomas K. Holcomb, Daniel Langholtz, and Priscilla Moyers. In my travels I have found students eager to grapple with the cultural issues raised in the book. I have also come to the realization, although I am certainly not the first to do so, that there are two paths to effective learning: the knowledge acquired through books and instructors and the wisdom gained from personal experience.

With the latter approach in mind, I present this book of exercises, designed not so much for students to regurgitate material from the book but to interact with it and in the process, I hope, to embark on a brief journey of self-discovery. The order of the exercises mirrors the order of material presented in *Reading Between the Signs*, from an overview of culture in general to dealing with specific interpreting challenges. The focus of the workbook, however, is slightly different. Here you will find more emphasis on developing and practicing an open-minded intercultural perspective and on identifying elements of your own cultural character.

Throughout my years of interest in the intersection between the fields of intercultural communication and sign language interpreting, my favorite moments have been the "aha" experiences when something I have read or heard has opened my eyes about a real-life misunderstanding. Those moments occur, not only among the clients for whom I am interpreting but also between myself and others. It is always unsettling to realize that no amount of reading and preparation can prevent the feeling of momentary disequilibrium produced by seeing things from a different cultural angle.

Here is a personal example, one of my own aha experiences. I was fortunate to have the help of Dr. Thomas Holcomb, a highly respected Deaf educator, when I wrote *Reading Between the Signs*. I discovered, however late, that I had originally introduced myself to Tom "incorrectly." We knew each other only slightly the day I met him at his office. I told him about my book project and explained who the publisher would be, and asked if he would be interested in working with me. He answered with a cool "Perhaps" and asked to read some of my completed chapters. It was only later, after we had started working together, that I became aware of my error. One day, while discussing definitions of culture, Tom proposed that we use Carol Padden's definition. I agreed and casually mentioned that I knew Carol Padden because she had been one of my thesis advisers.

"You know Carol Padden! Why didn't you tell me before?" Tom demanded heatedly.

For a moment I froze. I remember thinking, "What's the big deal? You seem to think I *owed* you the information!" Then suddenly it clicked. One of the themes of our chapter on Deaf culture was the importance of information sharing, which is exemplified in many cultural behaviors, including introductions. I finally made the connection!

"You mean I should have told you about Carol the first day when we met in your office?" I ventured.

"Yes!" came the strong reply.

What followed was a stimulating discussion in which I explained to Tom my difficulty in carrying out what is considered "appropriate" behavior for hearing people during introductions; that is, mentioning names of well-known Deaf people one has had connections with in order to show he or she

can be trusted. Because of the ingrained disapproval of "name-dropping" in American culture, I would still *feel* I was being rude to do so. Tom understood my dilemma, and we discussed several options for satisfying both cultural "pulls."

In a workbook like this, it is difficult to re-create such a moment for the reader—when a cross-cultural encounter leads to a flash of insight. I hope, however, that in completing the exercises you may learn something new about your cultural self and perhaps prepare the ground for the future blossoming of your own real-time intercultural insights.

HOW TO USE THE WORKBOOK

The exercises in this book are designed to be completed by students independently. It is assumed, however, that most use will be in a classroom setting, under the guidance of an instructor. Therefore, suggestions are made, when appropriate, for group discussion or additional activities that may be undertaken in small groups after you have completed the written exercise.

Also assumed is the fact that most readers will work on these exercises in the course of reading *Reading Between the Signs.* The material is organized around the book's chapters, follows the same progression, and may be most useful to complete after having read the corresponding chapter mentioned. Although the exercises are not a test of your understanding of the material in the book, going back to read specific sections in the book may help to illuminate and reinforce certain concepts for you.

It is also possible, by contrast, that you may work on these exercises on your own, to earn continuing educational units, for example. Such use of this workbook would also be entirely appropriate. If you are working through this workbook on your own, you will be even more likely to want to refer to corresponding sections of *Reading Between the Signs* as needed.

You will notice that the sections of the workbook do not match up perfectly with the chapters in *Reading Between the Signs:*

Workbook Section(s)	**Text Chapter**
Sections II, "What Is Culture?" and III, "The Intercultural Perspective"	Chapter 2, "The Study of Culture"
Section IV, "Basic Distinctions in Intercultural Communication"	Chapter 3, "Selected Topics"
Section V, "Examining Your Values"	Chapter 4, "Do Americans Really Have a Culture?"
Section VI, "Politeness Is Relative"	Chapter 5, "American Deaf Culture"
Section VII, "Decoding Assumptions in Interpreting Situations"	Chapter 8, "Techniques for Cultural Adjustments"

My intention was not to create the type of busywork exercises I remember from my own middle-school textbooks. The questions at the end of the chapter in social studies textbooks, such as, "What were the three main factors that led to the Civil War?" initially encouraged a frantic search for the corresponding keywords in the text, and eventually led to the practice of skimming the chapter with the singled-minded goal of finding the answers to the questions at the end of the chapter. I hope, therefore, that you will find the rather fluid connection between the book and the workbook fits with my goal of creating a more meaningful experience for you—more "ahas" that stick in your mind.

EXPANDED TOPICS

Another difference between the workbook and *Reading Between the Signs* is the expanded focus on two important topics. After completing the book several years ago, I have continued to explore two areas that hold a special fascination for me: the relativity of politeness and the distinction between direct and indirect communication styles. These seem to be key elements in comparing American Deaf and mainstream cultures. I have increased my understanding of these two areas through further reading and discussion with others but more directly by working with my Deaf colleagues in copresentations.

Priscilla Moyers and, on occasion, Daniel Langholtz have been willing to take on the persona of "Miss Deaf Manners," an expert on politeness in Deaf culture, while I became "Miss Hearing Manners," a corresponding authority figure on mainstream culture. (Please bear in mind that the two Miss Manners keep their tongues lodged firmly in cheek.) Our interactive public debates have allowed us to hear audience members' own concerns regarding the puzzle of culturally appropriate behavior firsthand, and work on making our explanations of both cultural views equally lucid. These presentations have been invaluable sources of information and encouragement for continuing to explore these issues and sharing the results with wider audiences. To that end, Tom Holcomb and I undertook a video project entitled *See What I Mean: Differences between Deaf and Hearing Cultures*, which is, we hope, the first of a series to further explore and disseminate these often contrasting cultural viewpoints.

EXCERCISES FROM MANY SOURCES

I am indebted to many authors for generously allowing me to borrow and sometimes adapt exercises they have created. The most often cited source for exercises in this workbook is *Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook*, a wonderful compilation that is unfortunately out of print. As a former U.S. government publication, however, it is in the public domain and accessible at the following Website: www.peacecorps.com/library/culture.cfm

One of the many contributors mentioned in the acknowledgments for *Culture Matters* is Craig Storti, who later adapted much of the material for a nonspecified readership in his user-friendly volume, *Figuring Foreigners Out*. I am a fan of Mr. Storti's insightful and engaging way of presenting cultural material and have happily relied on some of his other excellent books, including *Cross-Cultural Dialogues* and *Old World/New World*. Other sources I have used include *Experiential Activities for Intercultural Learning,* edited by H. Ned Seelye, and *A Manual of Structured Experiences for Cross-Cultural Learning,* edited by William Weeks, Paul B. Pedersen, and Richard W. Brislin. I have also adapted exercises from activities learned at the Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication in Portland, Oregon.

The remaining exercises are my own, some of them adapted from workshop presentations done in collaboration with Priscilla Moyers, Daniel Langholtz, and Thomas Holcomb. I assume all responsibility for any ambiguities or errors.

The intriguing thing about culture is that the elements that make up our cultural selves are not always visible or even in our conciousness. Sometimes we need a little help to see how these systems operate within us. This reminds me of a science book I had when I was younger. Its purpose was to illuminate the systems within the human body. It began with a picture of a boy or girl. Then, one placed over that picture a series of transparent overlays that illustrated the organs within the body, as well as the skeletal, muscular, and circulatory systems. I was delighted with this book for it gave me the ability to visualize what had been inside me all along, the essential components that made me a human being. Perhaps this workbook can help make a little clearer some of our values, beliefs, and attitudes—elements of another type of system operating within us—that makes us cultural beings.

Note to the Reader

Before you begin, I want to acknowledge the fact that a workbook like this contains inherent inaccuracies. There is no way the author can know in advance who will be filling out the pages of her book or be able to include every possible point of view. It is also undeniable that all cultures are made up of individuals; general statements will surely not describe every member's experience. Although generalizations about American, Deaf, Japanese, or any culture are bound to be inexact oversimplifications, they are nonetheless helpful in discussing overarching cultural tendencies in a coherent and useful manner. While I am borrowing from the field of intercultural communication the general trends and commonalities identified as being features of American culture, I do not mean to discount the individual, regional, ethnic, and cultural differences that make up the many-colored mosaic of American

culture. Therefore, if your experience of American, Deaf, or any other culture mentioned in this book differs from the description provided, please take the opportunity to share with your instructor and classmates or colleagues your own worldview. They will be enriched by your sharing.

SECTION
II

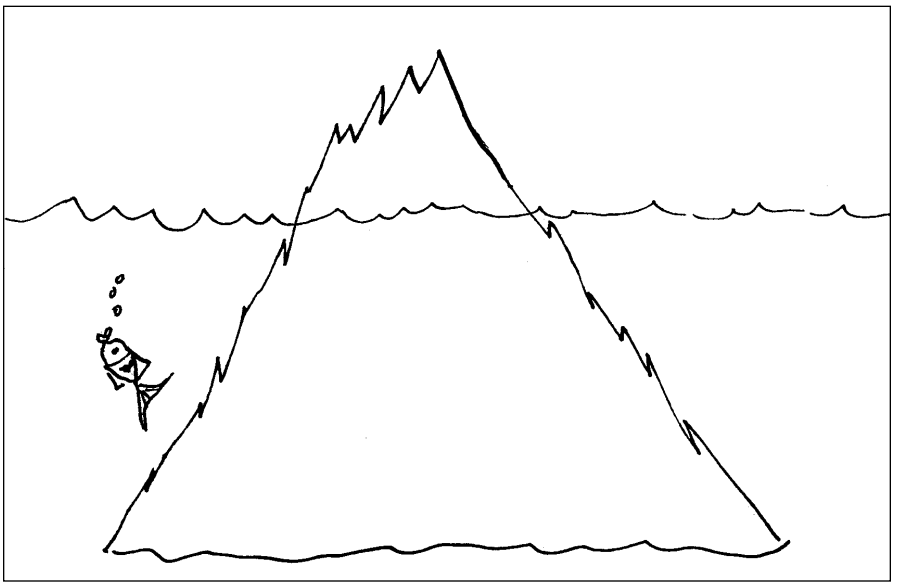
WHAT IS CULTURE?

When we begin to wrestle with the concept of culture, we may find it a bit unwieldy. Either we get mired in the minutiae of curious customs or engulfed by an all-encompassing cultural fog.

The three exercises in this section may help us to untangle culture's twisted threads so that we get a clearer picture of the elements that can be ascribed to the effect culture has on our lives. "The Iceberg" gives us a good starting point by having us delineate the visible aspects of culture from those that remain hidden but continue to exert their influence. "Matching Values and Behavior" introduces us to the vital link between values and behavior. And "Identifying Universal, Cultural, or Personal Behaviors" allows us to better discern what constitutes culture by distinguishing what does not.

1 The Iceberg

Culture has been aptly compared to an iceberg. Just as an iceberg has a visible section above the waterline and a larger, invisible section below the waterline, so culture has some aspects that are observable and others that can only be suspected, imagined, or intuited. Also, like an iceberg, that part of culture that is visible (observable behavior) is only a small part of a much bigger, invisible whole (assumptions, values, beliefs).



Directions: The numbered items that appear below are all features of culture. In the drawing of the iceberg above, write above the waterline the numbers for those features you consider to be observable behavior or artifacts; write the remaining numbers beneath the water line.

1. facial expressions
2. religious beliefs
3. children's games
4. tempo of work
5. paintings
6. values
7. folk dancing

8. beliefs about disciplining children
9. attributes of a good leader
10. gestures
11. holiday customs
12. preference for competition or cooperation
13. obligations owed to friends
14. notions of modesty (which part(s) of body should be covered)
15. foods
16. eating habits
17. relationship to animals
18. definition of insanity
19. work ethic
20. what constitutes beauty
21. music
22. style of dress
23. attitudes toward dependence
24. concept of personal space
25. rules of social etiquette

You can see that there is a relationship between those items that appear above the waterline and those that appear below it. In most cases, *the invisible aspects of culture influence or cause the visible ones*. Religious beliefs, for example, are clearly manifest in certain holiday customs, and notions of modesty affect styles of dress.

Suggested answers to this exercise appear on page 13.

Optional Follow-up Activity: In small groups, take turns discussing your experiences visiting another culture. Come up with three things you noticed immediately that were different there (these items would be placed on the top part of the iceberg). If you remained in the other culture long enough to become aware of the hidden aspects of culture (those from the lower part of the iceberg), describe how you were made aware of the differences in values.

Adapted from an activity in *Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook*, from Peace Corps Information Collection and Exchange.

2 Matching Values and Behavior

This exercise demonstrates one of the key features of culture just described: the cause and effect relationship between people's assumptions, values, and beliefs (the invisible side of culture) and their behavior (the visible side). This relationship is at the heart of culture, which is to say that there can be no real understanding of culture if this relationship is not likewise understood.

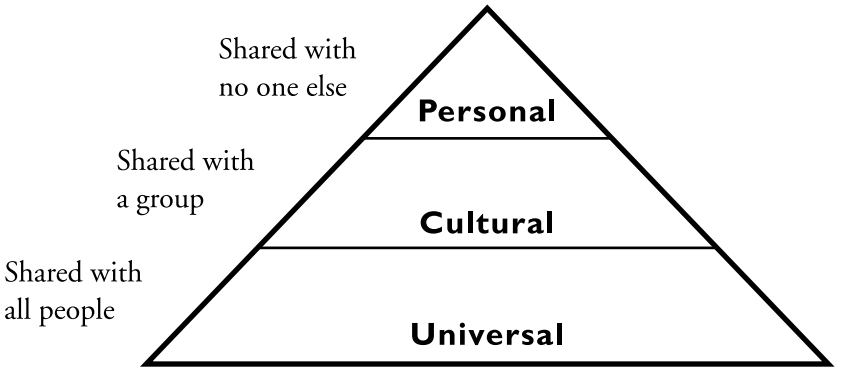
Directions: Below you will find a list of ten values or beliefs on the left side and ten behaviors on the right. Match each value or belief with a behavior which someone who holds that value is likely to exhibit.

1. Being direct	____ Use of understatement
2. Centrality of family	____ Asking people to call you by your first name
3. Fatalism	____ Taking off from work to attend the funeral of a cousin
4. Saving face	____ Not asking for help on an exam from the person sitting next to you
5. Respect for age	____ Disagreeing openly with someone at a meeting
6. Informality	____ Not laying off an older employee whose performance is weak
7. Deference to authority	____ At a meeting, agreeing with a suggestion you think is wrong
8. Being indirect	____ Inviting the teaboy to eat lunch with you in your office
9. Self-reliance	____ Asking the boss's opinion on something you are an expert on
10. Egalitarianism	____ Accepting, without question, that something cannot be changed

Suggested answers to this exercise appear on pages 113–114.

Adapted from *Figuring Foreigners Out* by Craig Storti.

3 Identifying Universal, Cultural, or Personal Behaviors



Not every aspect of human behavior is related to culture. Referring to the picture above, the largest section at the bottom of the triangle represents behaviors we share with all people. Universal behaviors would include our basic needs such as eating and sleeping, biological processes that all humans experience, and certain behaviors that set as apart from the animals, such as our sophisticated use of tools and language.

The small section at the top of the triangle represents behaviors that we don't necessarily share with anyone else. They are our individual idiosyncrasies or preferences and may include ways that we diverge from the mainstream tendencies of our group.

It is the middle section that focuses on behaviors, values, and attitudes that we *share with other members of a large group*. These, then, constitute the elements of culture—national, professional, religious, ethnic, and so on.

Directions: Next to each of the statements below, put a **U** if you think the behavior is universal, a **C** if it is cultural, or a **P** if it is personal.

_____ **1.** preparing and eating meals

_____ **2.** birthday cakes with candles

_____ **3.** liking red roses

_____ **4.** going to sleep at night

_____ **5.** not liking spicy food

_____ **6.** losing your baby teeth

_____ **7.** eating with fork, spoon, and knife

_____ **8.** putting a lost tooth under your pillow for the "tooth fairy"

_____ **9.** eating salad at the end of the meal

_____ **10.** being shocked if a guest wears white to a wedding

_____ **11.** going through changes at puberty

_____ **12.** rite of passage rituals

_____ **13.** sleeping with a bedroom window open

_____ **14.** feeling sad when a family member dies

_____ **15.** a bride tossing her garter after the wedding

_____ **16.** giving someone yellow flowers to show you miss him or her

_____ **17.** giving someone a white envelope with money inside on the occasion of a death

_____ **18.** eating noodles on New Year's Eve

_____ **19.** using language to express humor

_____ **20.** preferring playing soccer to reading a book

Suggested answers to this exercise appear on pages 114–115.

Small-Group Exercise: Take turns coming up with two additional examples for each of the three categories (two universal, two personal, and two cultural items).

Adapted from an activity in *Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook*, from Peace Corps Information Collection and Exchange.

SECTION
III

THE INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE: SEEING THROUGH OTHERS' EYES

Practicing yoga postures helps to make our body's muscles stronger and more flexible. The ability to see the world from several cultural perspectives depends on a kind of "mental muscle" that also needs strengthening. The more effortlessly we can switch between our own view of things and someone else's, the easier it will be for us to understand and adapt to cross-cultural situations. We are not born with this open-minded flexibility, but we can develop our "cultural-switching muscle" through practice. The four exercises I have assembled here will give you a chance to flex your brain to this end. Just remember a tip from yoga practitioners: when your body or mind seems to be tied in a knot, breathe and relax.

4 In the Mind of the Beholder

We all believe that we observe reality, things as they are, but what actually happens is that the mind interprets what the eyes see and gives it meaning: it is only at this point, when meaning is assigned, that we can truly say we have seen something. In other words, what we see is as much in our minds as it is in reality. If you consider that the mind of a person from one culture is going to be different in many ways from the mind of a person from another culture, then you have the explanation for that most fundamental of all cross-cultural problems: the fact that two people look upon the same reality, the same example of behavior, and see two entirely different things.

Any behavior observed across the cultural divide, therefore, has to be interpreted in two ways:

1. the meaning given to it by the person who acts out the behavior, and

2. the meaning given to it by the person who observes the behavior

Only when these two meanings are the same do we have successful communication, successful in the sense that the meaning that was intended by the doer is the one that was understood by the observer.

PART 1

Directions: In the first part of this exercise, read the descriptions of the eight instances of behavior given below and write down your immediate response to or interpretation of that behavior in terms of your own cultural values, beliefs, or perception. This exercise can be done individually, in pairs, or in small groups. The first one has been done for you.

1. A person comes to a meeting half an hour after the stated starting time.

Your interpretation: *This person is late and should at least apologize or give an explanation.*

2. Someone kicks a dog.

Your interpretation: _____

_____

_____

3. At the end of a meal, people belch audibly.

Your interpretation: _____

_____

_____

4. Someone makes the "okay" gesture at you.

Your interpretation: _____

_____

_____

5. A woman carries a heavy pile of wood on her back while her husband walks in front of her carrying nothing.

Your interpretation: _____

_____

_____

6. A male guest helps a hostess carry dirty dishes into the kitchen.

Your interpretation: _____

_____

_____

7. A young man and a young woman are kissing each other while seated on a park bench.

Your interpretation: _____

_____

_____

8. While taking an exam, a student copies from the paper of another student.

Your interpretation: _____

_____

_____

PART 2

Directions: In the second part of this activity, you are asked to imagine how these same eight behaviors would be perceived or interpreted by someone from a culture different from your own. The particular cultural difference is described in each case. Read the behavior and the description of the culture, then write in the space provided how you think a person from such a culture would interpret that behavior. (If you happen to be a member of a culture that subscribes to the beliefs as stated, just write down your interpretation from your own point of view.)

1. A person comes to a meeting half an hour after the stated starting time. How would this act be interpreted:

by someone from a culture where people always arrive half an hour after the stated starting time?

Interpretation: _____

_____

2. Someone kicks a dog. How would this act be interpreted:

by someone from a culture where dogs always carry disease?

Interpretation: _____

_____

3. At the end of a meal, people belch audibly. How would this act be interpreted:

by someone from a culture where belching is the normal way to compliment the food?

Interpretation: _____

_____

4. Someone makes the "okay" gesture at you. How would this act be interpreted:

by someone in whose culture this gesture is obscene?

Interpretation: _____

_____

by someone in whose culture this gesture has romantic or sexual connotations?

Interpretation: _____

_____

5. A woman carries a heavy pile of wood on her back while her husband walks in front of her carrying nothing. How would this act be interpreted:

by someone from a culture where women are proud of their strength and ability to work hard?

Interpretation: _____

_____

6. A male guest helps a hostess carry dirty dishes into the kitchen. How would this act be interpreted:

by men from a culture where men never help clean up after a meal?

Interpretation: _____

_____

7. A young man and a young woman are kissing each other while seated on a park bench. How would this act be interpreted:

by someone from a culture where men and women never touch in public?

Interpretation: _____

_____

8. While taking an exam, a student copies from the paper of another student. How would this act be interpreted:

by someone from a culture where exams are not fair and are designed to eliminate students at various stages of the education system?

Interpretation: _____

_____

by someone from a culture where it is shameful not to help your friend if you are able to?

Interpretation: _____

_____

Adapted from an activity in *Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook*, from Peace Corps Information Collection and Exchange.

5 D.I.E.: Description, Interpretation, Evaluation

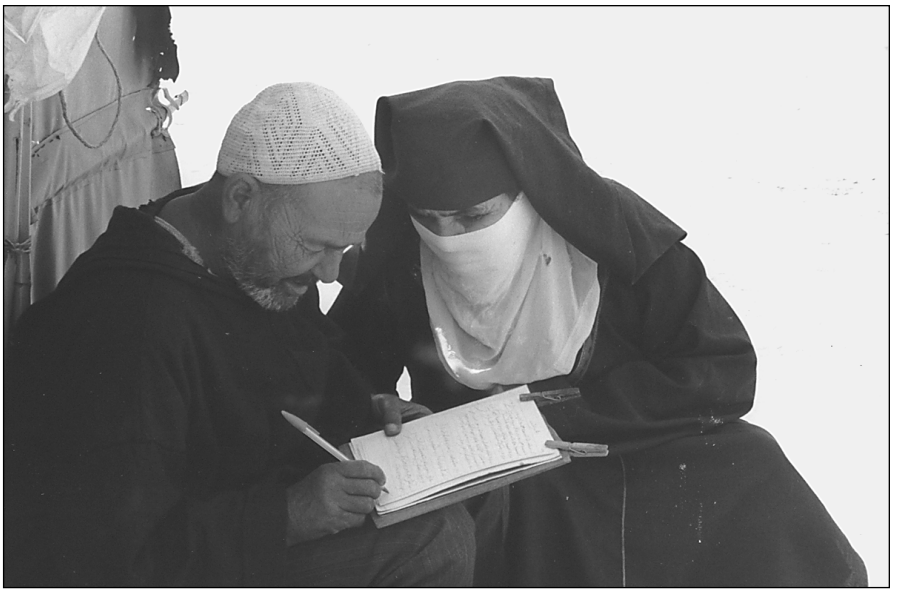
In cross-cultural encounters it is easy to jump to an erroneous conclusion about another person's motives, behavior, and character when we base our judgments on assumptions from our own culture. One way to arrest our rush to judgment is to separate out three aspects of perceiving another's behavior. D.I.E. is an easy-to-remember initialism that might come in handy, but actually gaining the skills involved requires some practice.

D: **Description.** The task is to describe only what you see, an objective listing of facts, without drawing any conclusions.

I: **Interpretation.** Now you can interpret what you think about what you see. What is your guess about what is going on in the situation?

E: **Evaluation.** Now you can express your feelings about what you think is going on.

Let's practice with this picture:



© 1982, Joel Gordon

Description

First, let's make a list of what we can observe from the photograph:

1. A man is holding a pen and a pad of paper.
2. He is wearing a hat.
3. A figure that could be a woman is sitting close to the man.

Add a few more observable facts, but be careful not to interpret yet.

4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Interpretation

Now, let's list a few possibilities of what we think could be going on in the photo.

1. It could be that they are married. They have found a husband for their daughter, and the man is signing the marriage contract.
2. It could be that he is Deaf and he is writing a note to communicate with his hearing sister.
3. It could be the woman is teaching the man how to write.

Write down a couple of alternate interpretations.

4. _____
   _____
5. _____
   _____
6. _____
   _____

Evaluation

Finally, you may put down your emotional reaction (either positive or negative) to the interpretations, matching the numbers for I and E.

For example, Interpretation 1 was "It could be that they are married. They have found a husband for their daughter, and the man is signing the marriage contract." First, come up with a positive reaction to that statement, such as

1. (positive reaction) *I am glad they are setting up their daughter for a good future.*

Then write a negative reaction to Interpretation 1, for example,

(negative reaction) *I think it's terrible that the daughter has no freedom to choose her own husband.*

For Interpretation 2 we had "It could be that he is Deaf and he is writing a note to his hearing sister."

2. (positive reaction) *I feel happy that the hearing sister is taking the time to write to him.*

(negative reaction) *I am angry that she never took the time to learn sign language.*

Now you try writing one positive and one negative reaction to Interpretation 3 ("It could be that the woman is teaching the man how to write.")

3. (positive reaction) _____

_____

(negative reaction) _____

_____

Of course, the reactions listed in 1 and 2 (above) are only examples of possible evaluations and not necessarily how you would feel about these possible interpretations. Now take your Interpretations 4, 5, and 6 (on page 22) and write corresponding reactions, either positive or negative.

4. _____

_____

5. _____

_____

6. _____

_____

Now try to do all three steps on your own, in pairs or in small groups, for the next picture:

American Museum of Natural History Library

Description

Describe what you see.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

Interpretation

What do you think is going on?

1. _____
   _____
2. _____
   _____
3. _____
   _____
4. _____
   _____

Evaluation

What are your feelings about what you think is going on?

1. _____
   _____
2. _____
   _____
3. _____
   _____
4. _____
   _____

For a description of what these photographs actually depict, see page 115.

Of course, the point of the D.I.E. exercise is to skillfully analyze face-to-face encounters, not photographs. Can you recall an interaction you have had with someone from another culture (including Deaf/hearing or other subcultures) when you may have come to a conclusion about the other person's behavior based on a quick judgment? Try to go back mentally and separate out the three components: Description, Interpretation, and Evaluation.

Here is an example of something that happened to me recently. I was to interpret a wedding ceremony for a Deaf friend of the groom's. I approached this assignment with some trepidation because it was to take place in a church

I had never visited. I had no previous experience with this religious denomination but assumed it to be quite strict and devout.

Upon entering the church, I realized that the event was further complicated by the fact that most of the guests were speaking a language other than English. It turned out that the bride's family and friends were members of a cultural and linguistic community. Luckily, the minister was bilingual and conducted the service by alternating between English and the other language. Unfortunately, he failed to translate all the prayers and symbolic rituals into English. I was consequently left guessing about the significance of many parts of the ceremony. The most striking feature of this church for me was the total lack of music. I concluded that perhaps this religious denomination was so strict that it prohibited music. Inwardly, I pitied the wedding couple and the congregation.

Later, after the service, as I stood in line for the restroom, I happened to overhear one wedding guest whispering to another (in English, fortunately) about what a shame it was that the organist had taken sick at the last minute. I muffled a gasp as I realized how I had nearly left the church having made a completely erroneous judgment.

Analysis of one element of my story:

Description: There was no music in the wedding ceremony.

Interpretation: I concluded that this religious denomination was so strict that it prohibited music in its services.

Evaluation: I felt sorry for the wedding party.

Looking back I see how dangerous it is to come to a conclusion about another culture based on too little information.

Now you try to analyze an incident, either by writing about it on your own or in discussion with members of a small group, taking turns telling your stories.

Description

Objectively describe what happened.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

Interpretation

Include your interpretation at the time this interaction occurred, plus some alternate possibilities that you can see in hindsight.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

Evaluation

Describe how you felt at the time, given your interpretation, plus other feelings that might result from your alternative interpretations.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

Looking back on this experience, do you have a different perspective than you did before?

Adapted from an exercise often attributed to Milton and Janet Bennett.

6 Double-Loop Thinking: Seeing Two Perspectives

This exercise builds on the skills you have just practiced in Exercise 5, D.I.E., but it adds an additional step. The incident below describes a cross-cultural encounter between two students, Ilse and Leilani. You will have practice seeing things from each of their points of view. The situation is examined first from Ilse's perspective and then from Leilani's perspective. As in the D.I.E. exercise, a distinction is made between the facts of the encounter and the inferences about it made by each participant. The extra step of "double-loop thinking" is a two-part process. The first task is to get past your initial judgments about another person's behavior by seeing the situation from his or her point of view. The "double-loop" is to see how the other person can just as easily misinterpret the meaning behind your actions.

Incident 1

Ilse (of German descent), and Leilani (from Hawaii) are first-year students at Chandler Engineering College. Both had requested single rooms in the college dormitory. However, because of a housing shortage, they were assigned a two-person room.

From the start, their relationship seemed less than amicable. Ilse created rules to divide ownership of the living space into equal parts; her share was orderly and tidy. Leilani stapled and taped colorful posters helter-skelter on the walls, played rock music, Polynesian style, and chatted with her island friends sprawled three or four deep on her bed, which normally could not be seen anyway due to clothes, clutter, and debris.

One morning after Ilse left for class, Leilani remembered that an important essay was due. She needed a dictionary for the task and took one from Ilse's shelf, without permission. The day was warm and sunny, so she gathered up her materials and a blanket and left the dorm to write her paper on the lawn. Joined by friends on the blanket, the dictionary was soon lost among the pile of papers and texts.

Ilse returned to her room after class to find the wide, empty space on the bookshelf. During the blowup that followed, Leilani claimed,

> I needed the dictionary just then. What's the point of having books if you don't use them? Do you expect them to be ornaments? You are stingy, mean, obsessed. You value control over everything. Well, you won't control me! Someday, you'll find friends are more important than books!

Ilse struck back, shouting,

> The dictionary is mine. I spend my money on books, not junk music like you, and I take care of them. If you had a dictionary, you wouldn't know where it was. You are totally irresponsible. In your crowd, everyone just helps themselves. You have no respect for other people, and you steal my books, too. All you care about is playing your rock music and partying with your friends. Well, you aren't my friend!

Analysis

First, analyze the incident objectively. Make a list of specific behaviors from statements in the incident that refer to observable behavior (similar to D in D.I.E., pages 22, 24, and 26). You are given some examples to help you begin.

Specific Behaviors

Ilse

1. requested a single room

2. created rules to divide space equally

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Leilani

1. requested a single room

2. stapled and taped posters to the walls

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

It is also important to note which statements are inferences, that is, judgments (similar to **E** in the D.I.E.) made or conclusions drawn based on what happened. These commonly involve expectations, perceptions, values, and/or attributions of causality about the events. Make a list of inferences found in the description of the incident. Here are some examples to help you begin.

Inferences

Leilani infers that Ilse

1. is stingy, mean, and obsessed with rules

2. expects books to be ornaments

3. _____

4. _____

Ilse infers that Leilani

1. is irresponsible and careless of possessions

2. is disrespectful of others

3. _____

4. _____

Double-Loop Thinking

A more advanced stage in describing a cross-cultural event involves what is known as double-loop thinking, that is, knowing and understanding what the other person thinks of your behavior, expectations, and values. In simpler terms, it is called *taking the perspective of the other*.

Let's start with Ilse's perspective. To Ilse, her actions are consistent with her values.

Ilse's view of herself

MY BEHAVIOR: creating rules and being careful with books

Is done with the

EXPECTATION: of knowing where my books are

And is influenced by

MY VALUE: orderliness and responsibility

Using the example above, let's take Leilani's perspective on Ilse's actions. She looks at the same behavior but has a completely different interpretation of the meaning behind it.

Leilani's view of Ilse's behavior

YOUR BEHAVIOR: creating rules and being careful with books

Is done with the

EXPECTATION: of hoarding information and property

And is influenced by

YOUR VALUE: to control; possessions are more important than people

Now you can practice the skill of double-loop thinking by first taking Leilani's view of own her actions.

Leilani's view of herself

MY ACTION: letting my friends use my books

Is done with the

EXPECTATION: _____

And is influenced by the

VALUE: _____

Ilse's perspective on Leilani's behavior

YOUR ACTION: letting your friends use your books

Is done with the

EXPECTATION: _____

And is influenced by the

VALUE: _____

The ability to imagine that there is more than one possible point of view in any given situation is a valuable skill. Let us now take as an example a common misunderstanding that often occurs between beginning interpreters and their Deaf consumers:

Incident 2

Ginger is a recent graduate from an interpreter training program who is committed to succeeding in her new profession. She has just finished interpreting a lecture and is nervously wondering how she did. One of her Deaf consumers, Fred, approaches her and comments that some of her signs were not clear. Ginger feels her stomach tighten and her face flush. Her first thought is, "Boy, I really blew it." She assumes that Fred thinks she is a lousy interpreter and infers that his underlying message is that she should give up the interpreting profession. She rushes out of the room without responding to Fred.

Fred, seeing Ginger's stricken expression, is confused. Doesn't she realize, he wonders, that my comment means I think she has the potential to become a very good interpreter? My criticism is my investment in her continued growth. If I thought she was hopeless, I wouldn't waste my energy. I took the time to tell her what she needs to do to become a better interpreter. She must know that I wouldn't do that if I didn't think she was worth it. When Ginger rushes off, Fred assumes she is not open to improving her skills and mentally checks her off his list.

Analysis

Briefly analyze the components of this situation.

Specific Behaviors

Ginger

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Fred

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Inferences

Ginger infers that Fred

1. _____

2. _____

Fred infers that Ginger

1. _____

2. _____

Fred's view of his own action

MY ACTION: Giving criticism means _____

_____

Ginger's view of Fred's action

YOUR ACTION: giving criticism means _____

_____

Ginger's view of herself

The reason I rushed off was _____

_____

Fred's view of Ginger

The reason you rushed off was _____

_____

Incident 3

Now that you have had some practice with double-loop thinking, let us take this a step further. At some point in the recent past, you probably have interacted with a person who behaved differently from you in a cross-cultural encounter. Go through the same steps outlined above to analyze the encounter.

Briefly describe the incident.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Specific Behaviors

My behavior

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

The other person's behavior

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

My view of myself

MY ACTION:_____

_____

Is done with the

EXPECTATION: _____

_____

And is influenced by

MY VALUE: _____

_____

The other person's view of the same behavior

YOUR ACTION: _____

_____

Is done with the

EXPECTATION: _____

_____

And is influenced by

YOUR VALUE: _____

_____

Now, you look at the other person's behavior, first from his or her point of view.

The other person's view of his/her own behavior

MY ACTION:_____

_____

Is done with the

EXPECTATION: _____

_____

And is influenced by

MY VALUE: _____

_____

My view of the other person (same behavior)

YOUR ACTION: _____

_____

Is done with the

EXPECTATION: _____

_____

And is influenced by

YOUR VALUE: _____

_____

Suggested answers to Incidents 1 and 2 of this exercise appear on pages 116–118.

Adapted from an exercise by Anne B. Pedersen in *Experiential Activities for Intercultural Learning*, edited by H. Ned Seelye.

7 Decoding Cross-Cultural Dialogues

As an avid puzzle solver and a student of intercultural communication, I literally squealed with delight when I found Craig Storti's *Cross-Cultural Dialogues*. The simple premise, that even brief encounters between people of different cultural backgrounds are rife with the potential for miscommunication, speaks directly to interpreters. Each of the seventy-four dialogues in Storti's book takes place between an American and a member of another culture, such as a Russian, Chinese, or Arab. Reading the dialogues, I found that a surprising number of the issues highlighted have direct parallels to variations between American Deaf and hearing cultures; I have selected four of those for this exercise.

In the several dozen workshops I have led around the country, the one activity that is sure to invigorate any group is one that I adapted from Mr. Storti's dialogues. They subtly serve the dual purpose of gently introducing Americans to the idea that the way they see the world may not be universally shared and of stimulating the curiosity of cultural puzzle solvers to further investigate the depths of culture and cultural differences.

This exercise is ideally suited for small groups, but it can be adapted for individual use as well. In either case, avoid the temptation to rush ahead to read the analysis; instead, brainstorm what you think could be at the root of the miscommunication, either on your own or in a group, before you read the explanation given. To make the temptation easier to resist, the explanation is given on the back page of each dialogue.

Directions: Follow the same steps for each dialogue:

1. Read through the dialogue.
2. Brainstorm: what are the cultural assumptions of the participants?
3. Read the explanation.
4. Note (or discuss in a group) any new information or perspective gained.
5. Identify any similar encounter you have experienced between a Deaf and a hearing person.

DIALOGUE 1: THUMBS DOWN

Jenny: How did the meeting go?

Tomoko: It was a very useful discussion.

Jenny: How so?

Tomoko: We all talked. And Mr. Takeda explained his reservations about the proposal.

Jenny: Did anyone else agree with him?

Tomoko: No. He was the only one who had some doubts.

Jenny: Then we won the vote.

Tomoko: Oh, there was no vote, of course. We postponed it.

Explanation for "Thumbs Down"

Asians, Japanese in this instance, tend to be less individualistic than Americans; the most important unit is the group, not the individual. In cultures where the group is paramount—the work group, the family, one's classmates—harmony becomes an essential value and consensus decision making is the rule. Jenny, from a culture where majority agreement is sufficient, finds it hard to believe that if everyone in the meeting except Mr. Takeda agreed on the proposal, it was not voted on and passed. But from Tomoko's point of view, if Mr. Takeda doesn't agree—and he would have expressed his reservations very quietly and probably before rather than during the meeting—then passing the proposal would have upset Mr. Takeda and adversely affected the harmony of the group. That, in turn, would be a more serious matter than the outcome of any one particular vote.

It's sometimes difficult for Americans to identify with consensus decision making, not only because we are an individualistic culture but also because consensus decisions take a lot longer to reach (and are therefore inefficient). On the other hand, many observers have noticed that once a group reaches consensus on a matter, it tends to achieve the agreed-upon goal much more quickly. In the United States, in contrast, we may get our 51 percent without much trouble, but we often spend a lot of time later on motivating and encouraging the 49 percent who weren't convinced in the beginning. In the end, the only difference between American and Japanese decision making may be that we do our consensus building after the vote and the Japanese do it before.

Consensus decision making is not limited to Asian cultures. American Deaf culture also practices this feature which is common to many collectivistic cultures. Before formal votes are taken at committee meetings, for example, there is commonly an informal process of checking with individual members to hear their opinions and concerns. Then there will be much discussion of the pros and cons of the issue at hand until a general consensus is reached. By the time the formal vote is taken, most members will be willing to accept the proposal. It will often pass unanimously or with only a few abstaining votes.

DIALOGUE 2: LUCKY FOR HASSAN

Ms. Anderson: Hassan was looking at your paper.

Abdullah: He was?

Ms. Anderson: Yes. He copied some of your answers.

Abdullah: Perhaps he didn't know the answers.

Ms. Anderson: I'm sure he didn't.

Abdullah: Then it's lucky he was sitting next to me.

Explanation for "Lucky for Hassan"

We would call this behavior cheating; Abdullah calls it helping a friend. For one thing, he may not want Hassan to be embarrassed by doing poorly on the test. Avoiding shame—especially public embarrassment—is a paramount Arab value. For another, Abdullah wants to be cooperative: in this case, he will help Hassan; in another case, perhaps Hassan will help him. In that way, the two of them face life's challenges together and fare rather better than each might on his own. What purpose is to be served by Abdullah keeping what he knows to himself when he could help someone else by sharing it?

For her part, Ms. Anderson no doubt sees this test as a chance to find out what Hassan and Abdullah know. If Hassan doesn't know very much about the subject, this test will motivate him to go back and learn, which will only be to his benefit in the future; that is, at some point down the road Hassan may need this information, and if he doesn't know it, to whom is he going to turn?

Notice the assumption here (one that Hassan would not understand) that in the end each of us ultimately has only our own self to rely on. Self-reliance may be a key American value, but the Arab view would be that you would always have your primary group (family or intimate friends) to turn to if you needed help, just as family and friends can always depend on you if they need help. The American saying "To stand on your own two feet" doesn't resonate in many cultures.

In Deaf culture, sharing information is such an expected behavior that withholding information is considered rude. Deaf people often do not enjoy the same easy access to information that hearing people take for granted. Sharing information within the group allows Deaf individuals and the group as a whole to better negotiate the intricacies of the hearing world, although this might not extend to sharing answers on a test. Seen in this light, "self-reliance" takes on a slightly different interpretation: it is the sharing of information that enables the group to become self-reliant.

DIALOGUE 3: EXPLANATIONS

Ms. Wright: Miss Chung, what can I do for you?

Miss Chung: Excuse me, I need some help with this new machine.

Ms. Wright: Of course. Let me explain it again.

Miss Chung: I asked Li, but she couldn't help me.

Ms. Wright: No, she hasn't tried it yet.

Miss Chung: It's a bit complicated.

Ms. Wright: It's very complicated, but after I explained it to you and asked if you understood, you said yes.

Miss Chung: Yes. Please excuse me.

Explanation for "Explanations"

Some time in the past, Ms. Wright explained this machine to Miss Chung and then asked her if she had understood. Miss Chung said yes. But in fact, as we now see, she had not understood and had even gone to ask her friend Li for help. Why did Miss Chung say she understood when she hadn't?

Miss Chung was trying to protect Ms. Wright from embarrassment. If she had said that she didn't understand the explanation, that would mean Ms. Wright hadn't done a very good job of explaining. And that would be humiliating for the boss. (It's also possible that Miss Chung claimed to understand in order to protect her own face and hoped her friend Li could put everything right.)

Now Miss Chung is in a tight spot: when Li can't help her, she is obliged to go back to Ms. Wright. Notice, though, how she tries to spare Ms. Wright undue embarrassment by emphasizing how complicated the machine is, implying that it must be very hard indeed to explain the workings of such a contraption.

The reader might wonder how one is supposed to find out whether someone like Miss Chung has understood instructions. Clearly, the way is not to ask a question that can be answered with yes or no, for the answer will have to be yes. You could ask Miss Chung to demonstrate what you have said while you watch, or you could have a colleague, someone who is her peer, teach her how to use the machine.

The situation portrayed in this dialogue has probably happened countless times to Deaf workers who have hearing supervisors. Communication problems are most likely to blame. Perhaps the supervisor expected the Deaf worker to lip-read the explanation (never a totally reliable method). Or the supervisor tried signing the directions with a less than fluent command of ASL. The Deaf worker may be embarrassed to admit to a lack of understanding. The easiest solution is often for the Deaf worker to approach a Deaf coworker and receive a clear explanation in ASL with no feeling of shame for needing a repetition.

DIALOGUE 4: A SOFTWARE UPGRADE

Brenda: I've heard there's a new version of that software program we use in our accounting system.

Andrei: The program we have works quite well.

Brenda: I know, but this new one is bound to be better. I think I'll order it and look it over.

Andrei: We're all quite used to this program.

Brenda: It can't hurt to check the new one out.

Andrei: Why do you say that?

Explanation for "A Software Upgrade"

Brenda, like many Americans, sees change as positive; a thing is almost worth trying for no other reason than it's new and different. "Tradition" and "traditional" may not be dirty words in our lexicon, but they are more often than not pejorative. Notice also Brenda's blithe (and very American) assumption that what's new is "bound to be better."

Russians (and most Europeans) tend to assume that what's new is automatically suspect and that, by and large, change is to be avoided except when it can't be helped (and even then it is instituted slowly and with the utmost caution). Andrei very much prefers the status quo, however imperfect it may be, to the new, which, his experience has taught him, can often be worse. He might be willing to entertain the idea of switching to the new software if there were a problem with what they are using at present, but as Brenda cheerfully admits, there isn't. To Andrei, therefore, it looks as if Brenda wants him to make a change for no other reason than her conviction that what is new is likely to be better. Up against the tried and true, against some software that has stood the test of time, this argument doesn't stand a chance.

Beyond that, even if the new software is an improvement over the old, would it really be worth all the time and effort required to train people in the new program? Are the new software's supposed advantages really worth the risk of disrupting productivity during the time it will take to phase it in?

The average American believes in the inexorable march of progress, that the future is bound to be better than the past. By contrast, many cultures hark back to a golden age next to which the present (to say nothing of the future) pales by comparison.

The parallel between this dialogue and Deaf culture is not to be found in a resistance to new technology. Many recent innovations that enhance communication have been happily received by most Deaf people (e.g., text pagers, video conferencing, captioning). Hearing Americans' enthusiasm for "progress," however, can also apply to things near and dear to the Deaf community's values. New "sign systems," such as SEE and Cued Speech, are regarded by many Deaf people as unnecessary meddling with their beloved language, ASL. And radical procedures such as cochlear implant surgery threaten the very future of the Deaf community itself. In these instances, it is hearing people's desire to take over and improve on ASL and eradicate Deaf culture that is not appreciated.

Dialogues and explanations (except for Deaf culture applications) taken from *Cross-Cultural Dialogues* by Craig Storti.

SECTION
IV

BASIC DISTINCTIONS IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Many fields use basic distinctions to organize information. The field of anthropology, for example, differentiates between patrilineal and matrilineal societies, hunter-gatherers and horticulturalists. Chapter 3 of *Reading Between the Signs* explores four major topics that form basic distinctions utilized by the field of intercultural communication: collectivism versus individualism, high-context versus low-context cultures, variations in time orientation, and cultural rhetoric. An understanding of these concepts is vital to their application to the field of interpreting. The following exercises will focus on each of these areas and give you practice in identifying the different cultural viewpoints represented.

8 Collectivism/Individualism

In "individualistic" cultures, like that of the United States, the individual is seen as the basic unit of identification. Independence and self-reliance are valued, as is creativity. The group is strengthened when each member is self-sufficient. Although individualists may join groups, doing so is not mandatory. Group membership may be temporary and evolve with changing life circumstances. Personal freedom is highly valued, and people who succeed by dint of their own efforts are much admired.

The majority of world cultures, by contrast, can be described as "collectivistic." Members of these cultures strongly identify with the group (e.g., extended family, work group, close friends) and work for its continued survival. Group members share many ideals and values and view themselves as distinct from nonmembers. Individuals often subordinate their personal aspirations to the objectives of the group. In other words, the goals of the group are the individuals' goals as well. American Deaf culture qualifies as a collectivistic culture with its reciprocal system of sharing resources, duty to exchange information, and strong feelings of loyalty to the Deaf community.

Identifying Features of Collectivism and Individualism

Directions: Read the list of statements below. Put an **I** next to those that characterize an individualistic point of view and a **C** next to those that demonstrate a more collectivistic orientation.

_____ **1.** A significant distinction is made between insiders and outsiders (those who are considered members of the culture and those who are not).

_____ **2.** One's status in the group depends on one's individual achievements.

_____ **3.** Group members feel responsible for each other.

_____ **4.** Heroes are respected for having achieved success through their own efforts and hard work.

_____ **5.** Children are often given choices to encourage them to begin to identify their own preferences.

_____ **6.** Decisions are made with the welfare of the group in mind.

_____ **7.** People identify with a few groups, and these attachments are long term and highly defining.

_____ **8.** People vote independently.

_____ **9.** A hero is respected for having helped other members of the community.

_____ **10.** Rules for group membership are rigid.

_____ **11.** The worst form of punishment would be ostracism from the group.

_____ **12.** One's status depends on one's connections with others.

_____ **13.** People are encouraged to be self-reliant and independent.

_____ **14.** Group membership is flexible and does not completely define its members' identities.

_____ **15.** Introductions stress connections to others.

_____ **16.** Introductions stress elements of personal identity.

_____ **17.** Dependence on others is viewed negatively, as a sign of weakness.

_____ **18.** People mistrust those who identify with a group too strongly.

Suggested answers to this exercise appear on page 118–119.

Explaining Individual and Collective Perspectives

Directions: These three questions can be answered individually or in small groups.

A. An element of American culture that foreigners often find strikingly different is the way we seem to push our kids out of the house at eighteen and often don't take care of our older citizens.

Suppose you are speaking with an immigrant from a culture where the extended family lives together, each generation caring for the next. She expresses dismay that in the United States many old people end up in "an old-age home, an establishment made up entirely of unrelated old people and their caretakers" (Wanning 1991, 79).

After thinking about individualist American values such as independence, self-reliance, and autonomy, write a short explanation for this puzzled foreigner, explaining our culture's point of view.

_____

_____

_____

_____

B. Imagine that you are a foreign student attending a college in the United States and that you are from a collectivistic culture. At a meeting, your college adviser asks you what major you will pursue. You answer, "My family has decided that I will study engineering." This reply seems to bother your adviser, who keeps pressing you with questions such as "Never mind about your family, what do you want?" Write a short explanation to help your adviser understand your situation. You may want to mention some collectivist values such as group loyalty, obligation, and identity as part of a group or family.

_____

_____

_____

_____

C. Another important difference between individualists and collectivists relates to the way achievement is viewed. In an individualistic culture, like the United States, success is seen as the accomplishment of the individual. Those who work hard should be justifiably proud of their own financial, academic, artistic, or athletic triumphs. In a collectivistic culture such as Deaf culture, however, individuals work toward the common goal of improving the status of the community as a whole. In light of this distinction, explain the rationale behind a toast from one Deaf community member to a Deaf woman who passed the state bar exam, "Hurray! One of *us* became a lawyer!"

9 High-Context/Low-Context Cultures

The concept of what is known as "high context" and "low context" relative to cultures can be a bit slippery to grasp. One way to visualize the influence of context may be to imagine it as a sort of clothing. Just as varying amounts of clothing can be worn on the body, various amounts of context can be wrapped around meaning. In differing climates, some groups will tend to wear more clothing than others. If, for example, people from a culture where many clothes are worn find themselves in a place where fewer clothes are the norm, they are likely to feel uncomfortable. Where the analogy between clothing and context breaks down, however, is that although it is easy to add or remove layers of clothing, the discomfort caused by too little or too much context is not so readily recognized or acted upon. Because our communication style is generally out of our conscious awareness, unexpected communicative behaviors from other people may give rise to feelings of awkwardness, confusion, or frustration without our being able to pinpoint their source.

For our purposes here, context refers specifically to the amount of information one is expected to share with others. In a high-context culture, where members share a similar background and a great deal of common knowledge, information flows freely. According to Edward T. Hall, the anthropologist who coined these terms, high-context cultures include (but are not limited to) "Japanese, Arab, and Mediterranean peoples, who have extensive information networks among family, friends, colleagues, and clients, and who are involved in close personal relationships." In such cultures, less information must be spelled out explicitly because members "keep themselves informed about everything having to do with people who are important in their lives" (Hall and Hall 1990, 6–7).

Conversely, members of low-context, heterogeneous cultures, which "include Americans, Germans, Swiss, Scandinavians, and other Northern Europeans. . .compartmentalize their personal relationships, their work, and many aspects of day-to-day life"(7). Because the flow of information is more controlled and because it is not assumed that members have a shared background, things will be spelled out in more detail. As Hall suggests, "Most of the information must be in the transmitted message in order to make up for what is missing in the context" (Hall 1976, 101). Either approach is well suited for a particular culture. The problem arises when a person from a high-context culture must communicate in a low-context culture or vice versa.

American Deaf culture would qualify as a high-context culture because "among Deaf people there is a great deal of shared knowledge, common expe-

riences, goals and beliefs, common friends and acquaintances, a common way of talking; that is, their lives share a common context" (Smith, Lentz, and Mikos 1988, 79).

Consequently, students of ASL and interpreters are advised to become familiar with a wide range of cultural references that are likely to come up in signed conversations. The assumption is that anyone involved in the Deaf community should already be aware of their meaning, so no explanation is likely to be included. Some examples would be abbreviations of Deaf organizations and institutions such as NAD, NTID, and MSSD; significant historical events such as the Congress of Milan, DPN, and Deaf Way I and II; and the names (and name signs) of past and present Deaf leaders and artists, both local and national.

Not only is it important for us to understand the concept of high- and low-context cultures, but we must also be aware of the complications that arise from a mismatch of communication styles. As Hall warns, "High-context people are likely to become impatient and irritated when low-context people insist on giving them information they don't need. Conversely, low-context people are at a loss when high-context people do not provide enough information" (Hall and Hall 1990, 9).

Here are two examples comparing low-context American culture with higher-context French culture.

> A friend of mine, an American woman, is married to a French man, and they live in the United States. The French husband loves to cook. One day, he was in the kitchen baking bread from a recipe in a typically American low-context cookbook. Coming to where the recipe read, "Place the dough in a bowl and cover with a clean cloth to rise," he became incensed. His wife heard loud French cursing coming from the kitchen. When she ran in and asked her husband what the matter was, he replied heatedly, "What do they think I am, stupid? Why do they have to tell me to use 'a clean cloth'! Do they think I am going to go down and get a dirty rag from the garage?" *

It should be clear from this example that when people from a high-context culture are given what they consider to be too much information, they may feel insulted.

*This story was told to me by Ruth Mastron, coauthor with Gilles Asselin of the engaging book *Au Contraire! Figuring Out the French.* See Section VIII, "Suggestions for Further Study."

Even though mainstream American culture is by and large low context, we all have high-context relationships with friends and family with whom we share a lot of common knowledge. If one person explains too much, however, it can feel offensive to the other. An example could be a mother explaining in detail to her grown son or daughter how to perform a simple chore. The son or daughter might respond, "I know that, Ma! I'm not a child!"

Can you think of a situation in which someone gave you too much information (i.e., explained something that you already knew or could easily figure out yourself) and you felt insulted? Briefly describe the situation and your feelings.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Conversely, as an American in Paris, I have not always received quite enough information. I remember when I was there with my daughter, Lila, who was five at the time and in her "Barbie period." She spotted a children's card game that featured a picture of Barbie on the box and persuaded me to buy it for her. Once I did, she was excited to start playing immediately. The name of the game was actually BARBIE: Un Jeu de Sept Familles. (Since I could read French, I had no problem translating that as "Barbie: A Seven-Families Game," although I had no idea what that meant.)

Lila opened the package and immediately wanted to know how many cards to deal out and how to play. I urged her to be patient as I read the directions, which read something like this:

> BARBIE is a seven-families game and is played just like any other seven-families game: the number of cards dealt is the same as in any other seven-families game; the object of the game is the same as any other seven-families game; the play proceeds like any other seven-families game; and the winner is decided as in any other seven-families game.

Obviously, it was assumed that I had grown up in France playing innumerable variations of seven-families games, and the rules would be common knowledge.

By this time Lila was beside herself with impatience and pulling my arm. So I did what any parent in a similar situation would have done—I made up my own rules. In this instance I was not given enough information, and I felt frustrated.

Can you think of a situation in which you were not given enough information because it was assumed you already knew enough to proceed? If you are an interpreter, you may think of such situations as staff meetings or computer-related discussions where the in-group jargon made you feel left out. Briefly describe what happened and your feelings about the situation.

10 Past/Present/Future Orientation

There are probably few in the Deaf community who would complain about the recent explosion in the availability of communication technology. Text pagers, computer web cams, and video relay systems are the latest innovations to join e-mail and fax machines in providing Deaf people with access to communication devices that were not even dreamed of a generation ago. Although it is too soon to predict precisely, these new innovations will undoubtedly affect aspects of Deaf culture. On the other hand, there are many features of Deaf culture that will be more resistant to change, including ASL itself, the traditional name-sign system, and many forms of folklore such as jokes and storytelling. This dichotomy relates to another area studied by interculturalists—differences in time orientation.

One way to characterize certain groups' view of time is to describe them as "past-oriented" cultures, of which Iran, India, and most Asian countries would be prime examples. Members of these cultures feel a deep sense of connection to their history, revere their ancestors, and respect traditions. "Future-oriented" cultures, such as the United States, by contrast, focus on progress and change, believing that new innovations can endlessly improve their lives. "Present-oriented" cultures, such as the Navajo and other native peoples, focus on the here and now, feeling that the past is over and the future is unknowable. (There are even other approaches to time that do not visualize it as a line but, as the Hindus do, as a cycle.)

Directions: For the following exercise, write *past*, *present*, or *future* in the space provided to indicate the orientation most closely associated with each statement.

_____ **1.** We have always done it this way.

_____ **2.** I heard they are coming out with a great, new operating system.

_____ **3.** Whenever he shows up, we will get started.

_____ **4.** I am sure we can improve on the way it's done now.

_____ **5.** I wish I lived back in "the golden age."

_____ **6.** Let's come up with a solid five-year plan.

_____ **7.** Why do you always spend so much energy planning and forecasting? Who knows if tomorrow will come?

_____ **8.** If we work hard enough, we can achieve anything!

_____ **9.** Why would anyone try to improve on our traditional wedding ceremony?

_____ **10.** *Que sera sera* (whatever will be, will be).

_____ **11.** We are following in the footsteps of our ancestors.

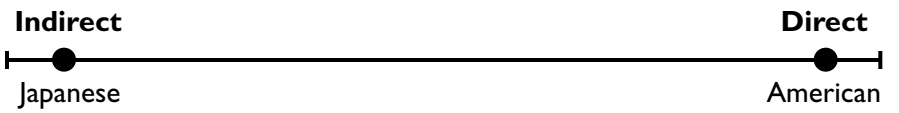
_____ **12.** "Be here now."

Suggested answers to this exercise appear on page 119.

11 Indirect/Direct Styles of Communication

Do you like to "tell it like it is" and appreciate when others "lay their cards on the table"? Do you feel it is better to "shoot from the hip" than to "beat around the bush"? Most Americans probably subscribe to the maxim, "Honesty is the best policy." After all, isn't our first president, George Washington, revered for his truthful confession in the cherry tree incident? Before we pat ourselves on the back for our forthrightness and square dealing, however, it is essential to get a larger perspective. We may not be quite as candid as we presume we are.

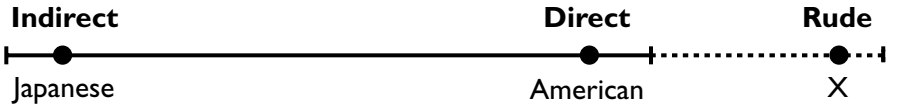
If ordinary Americans regard themselves as frank and aboveboard, it may come as no surprise that the majority of literature in the field of intercultural communication supports this assertion. "America shows a preference for direct, accurate, clear, and explicit communication"(Zaharna 1995). "Americans' tendency to use explicit words is the most noteworthy characteristic of their communication style"(Okabe 1983). "Americans are characterized as always forthright, direct, and clear" (Miller 1994). (These three citations are quoted in Nelson et al. 2002, 41.) In fact, countless scholars have made the classic comparison of Japanese culture's indirect communication style with American culture's direct style. If graphed on a continuum, it would look like this:



In Japan, saving face and preserving group harmony are of paramount importance. This social consciousness often leads to foreigners' frustration with what they term an "ambiguous" Japanese communication style. In an essay entitled "Sixteen Ways to Avoid Saying 'No' in Japan", author Keiko Ueda explains, "One must always think of the other's feelings and speak to avoid hurting those feelings" (1974, 186). It is true that *compared* with Japanese indirectness, American communication style is decidedly more direct.

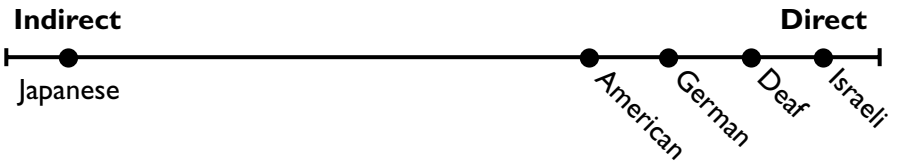
Let us assume for a moment, however, that another culture (we can call it "X") practices a style of communication that is considerably more direct than the American variety. Suppose a member of Culture X delivers a critical remark to an American in a blunt manner. Since Americans already pride themselves on being straight shooters, any comments that appear to be even

more direct than their own may well be judged as "just plain rude." The following graph depicts the way it might feel to many Americans.



Recent literature has, in fact, shown that there are quite a few cultures that practice a much more direct style of communication than American culture does and that regard with annoyance the American tendency to "beat around the bush." In Germany, where the direct approach is valued, "speaking plainly when it's for another person's own good will not only not be taken as a criticism…but will be seen as a sign of consideration." And "a true friend or colleague doesn't protect one from the truth but helps one see it" (Storti 2001, 241–42). Similarly, in Israeli culture, directness demonstrates "intimacy and solidarity" and "is associated with the expression of respect rather than disrespect" (Katriel 1986, 38, 116). In Korean collectivistic cultures, "a frank expression of criticism is done out of a 'we' feeling and in most cases is appreciated as a sign of ones' utmost love and concern for the target individual" (Kim 1993, 16). And in American Deaf culture, "straight talk" is the name given to the direct style of communication, which is valued for its lack of ambiguity. Among Deaf people, "hinting and vague talk in an effort to be polite are inappropriate and even offensive" (Lane 1992, 16).

Given the previous discussion, a more accurate representation of the indirect/direct continuum might look like this:



A key distinction in American culture regarding the choice of a direct or indirect approach may be the subject that is under discussion. South Korean Jin K. Kim makes this observation: "Americans are almost brutally honest and frank about issues that belong to public domains," but when it comes to delivering criticism,

> Their otherwise acute sense of honesty becomes significantly muted when they face the unpleasant task of being negative toward their personal friends. The fear of an emotion-draining confrontation and the virtue of being polite force them to put

> on a facade or mask. Instead of telling a hurtful truth directly, Americans use various indirect communication channels to which their friend is likely to be tuned. (1993, 15)

In my experience, the differences between direct and indirect communication styles in American Deaf and hearing cultures represent the most problematic area with the largest potential for misjudgments, misunderstandings, and hurt feelings on both sides. Although these misconceptions may be the source of much confusion between Deaf and hearing consumers of interpreting services, interpreters themselves and other hearing people involved with the Deaf community are not immune from their impact.

Here is a short quiz for you to begin to examine your feelings regarding direct and indirect styles of communication. In Section VII you will find the exercise "Translating between Direct and Indirect Styles," which will give you some further practice in one of the most challenging aspects of our work as interpreters.

Directions: Respond with a word or two to describe your first reaction to these questions (e.g., frustrated, hurt, confused):

1. When someone gives me a direct criticism, I feel_____

_____

2. If I am unsure of the other person's point, I feel _____

_____

3. If someone asks me how much money I earn, I feel_____

_____

4. If I made an important presentation, but was unsure of the audience's reaction, I would feel _____

_____

5. If I asked someone for a favor and he said yes but never followed through with it, I would feel_____

_____

6. If I asked my friend for a favor but was met with silence, I would feel

_____

_____

7. If I am talking with someone and her words seem to conflict with the message her body language is sending I feel_____

_____

8. Suppose you asked someone what seemed to be a simple question that necessitated a yes or no answer. How would you feel if she responded with a long story that did not seem to answer your original question?

_____

_____

9. Suppose a fellow student asks for your opinion of his signing or interpreting skills, which you feel are pretty dismal. Do you answer honestly or try to protect his feelings by padding the truth? _____

_____

10. How would you feel in the previous situation if you did tell your fellow student that you felt he could use a lot more practice and his reaction was to start crying? _____

_____

In completing the previous sentences you may have noticed that some of the situations provoked rather strong reactions because of your assumptions about direct and indirect communication styles. Use these reactions as a potential "red flag" for future intercultural encounters. If you find yourself internally fuming with thoughts such as "What is your point?" "What a rude question!" or " Well, you asked me my opinion," ask yourself if it is possible that you are reacting to a difference in communication style.

SECTION
V

EXAMINING YOUR OWN VALUES

> Cultural values define what is worth dying for, what is worth protecting, what frightens people and their social systems, what are considered proper subjects for study and ridicule, and what types of events lead individuals to group solidarity. Cultural values also specify which behaviors are important and which should be avoided within a culture.
>
> —Richard E. Porter and Larry A. Samovar

Many scholars have observed that, perhaps surprisingly, the last people to acknowledge the existence of American culture are Americans themselves. In keeping with our strong conviction that the individual has a right to select his or her own set of beliefs, attitudes, and goals, we tend to discount the idea that our values may be shaped by some larger system that is out of our conscious control. As Italian anthropologist E. L. Cerroni-Long observes, "Denying that an American culture exists seems to be one of the most consistent local cultural traits" (DeVita and Armstrong 1993, 91).

Suppose you decide you want to throw off your blinders and discover an undistorted reflection of your own cultural values. Gaining insight into the underlying values that govern the actions of others may hold the key to understanding their behavior, but attempting to get a glimpse of your own values is not so easy. It is a little like trying to get a good look at your own nose without the aid of a mirror. The next three exercises may hold up a type of looking glass that will help you view some of your guiding values a little more clearly.

The first exercise, "The Things We Say," looks at everyday English expressions to find the values embedded within them. The second exercise, "Many Communities," helps you pinpoint the values that you were taught growing up. And the third exercise, "How American Are You?" may help you visualize how your own values compare with those from other cultures.

12 The Things We Say: Culture in Casual Expressions

A useful way to understand a culture is by examining the expressions that people use in everyday conversation. These common expressions, after all, reflect what most people in a given society believe in or value.

Directions: Here are some common expressions from American English. Analyze their underlying meaning to decide which cultural value or belief is being expressed. Write your responses in the space provided. The first value/belief is done for you. If you get stuck, you may refer to the list of some American values on page 69.

1. He thinks he's better than so-and-so.

2. She's always putting on airs.

3. That person should be cut down to size.

value/belief: *egalitarianism*

In the expressions above there is a criticism of those who put themselves above others in an effort to be superior. The opposite of superiority can be expressed as egalitarianism.

4. Talk is cheap.

5. Put your money where your mouth is.

6. He's all talk and no action.

value/belief: _____

7. Every cloud has a silver lining.

8. Look on the bright side.

9. Tomorrow is another day.

value/belief: _____

Bonus Exercise: For interpreters and interpreting students, how would you sign these idiomatic expressions? Knowing the underlying value may help you decide.

10. She did something with her life.

value/belief: _____

11. Stand on your own two feet.

12. God helps those who help themselves.

value/belief: _____

13. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

value/belief: _____

14. Where there's a will there's a way.

15. Necessity is the mother of invention.

value/belief: _____

16. When you grow up, you can be whatever you want to be.

value/belief: _____

Suggested answers to this exercise appear on pages 119–120.

Bonus Exercise: Can you think of other common expressions, ones that you use yourself or that you heard growing up? Write them below and then state the value or belief they represent.

1. _____

value/belief: _____

2. _____

value/belief: _____

3. _____

value/belief: _____

SOME AMERICAN VALUES

achievement

doing

egalitarianism

freedom of choice

happiness

independence

individuality

optimism

problem solving

risk taking

self-determination

self-improvement

self-reliance

Adapted from an activity in *Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook*, from Peace Corps Information Collection and Exchange.

13 Many Communities

Most Americans, even if they think of themselves as 100 percent American, also belong to other groups (communities). What comes to mind first may be ethnic, cultural, or religious affiliations such as African American, Jewish American, Quaker, Catholic, Latino, Armenian, Italian American, or Chinese American. Some identities are geographic, such as a New Yorker, Texan, Southerner, or as someone who grew up on a farm or in a small town in the Midwest. Codas (children of Deaf adults) often feel an affinity with each other, having grown up in two cultures.

Directions: Think of your family and the people with whom you shared your childhood. Pick one (or more) of these identities and answer the following questions.

An example of answers to these five questions follows the exercise.

1. What groups/communities/subcultures do you identify with? (Pick one of these groups to answer the following questions.) _____

   _____

2. What are two or three ideals or values of your group? _____

   _____

3. What are several things elders tell the young people of your group?

   _____

4. What are three stories or folktales that impressed you growing up?

   _____

5. Are there any subcategories within your group? How do you decide who is "in" or "out"? _____

   _____

Bonus Exercise: If you are doing this exercise in a classroom setting, try to find several class members who share a subculture/group identity with you. Get together in small groups and brainstorm answers to the questions. After everyone answers the questions in their groups, ask each group to make a short presentation to share its community's values with the class.

Suggested Answers

1. There are at least three groups with which I identify: Californian, baby boomer, and Jewish. I will pick my Jewish identity to provide sample answers for the remaining.

2. Values: education is important, family comes first, *tikkun olam* (healing the world, making it a better place).

3. Elders say "Go to college," "Marry another Jew," "Eat."

4. Stories or folktales: my grandmother's story of how she came to Canada from Romania, the story of the golem, the parting of the Red Sea.

5. Subcategories: religious subcategories (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform) and cultural subcategories (parents/grandparents spoke Yiddish or Ladino, family is Ashkenazi or Sephardi).

14 How American Are You?

Americans are notorious for their resistance to accepting the fact that many of their values, attitudes, and behaviors are greatly influenced by their culture. Perhaps you, too, would insist that your values are entirely of your own choosing. This exercise may help you recognize which of your values are consistent with a mainstream American cultural worldview and which diverge from it.

The field of intercultural communication utilizes comparisons between cultures to help make clear distinctions. Often, in the literature, an "other" is imagined, called the contrast-American. This construct does not purport to represent any one culture but is used as a device to help Americans see themselves a little more clearly. If one can identify what Americans are not, then it is easier to discern what Americans are.

Directions: Below is a list of only a few of the defining characteristics of mainstream American culture. You have two tasks. First, pick which statement in each pair is more characteristic of the American culture. Put an A in the space provided. Next, put a CA in the space for the contrast-American orientation. Then, plot your own personal orientation by placing an "X" where you feel your own values lie on the continuum between the American and the contrast-American values. The first item is done for you.

1. I am most interested in

A **a.** doing, growing, and achieving things.

CA **b.** being in the moment.

Doing ——————X—————— **Being**

2. I like a pace of life that is

_____ **a.** fast, busy, and active.

_____ **b.** steady and rhythmic.

Active —————————————— **Steady**

3. My goals are

_____ **a.** spiritual, experiencing the fullness of life and its pleasure and pain.

_____ **b.** achievement, material things, comfort, and the absence of pain.

Achievement ——— **Spiritual Goals**

4. My reaction to a problem is usually

_____ **a.** to come up with a plan to solve it.

_____ **b.** to do my best to cope with the situation as it is.

Problem Solving ——— **Coping**

5. I feel that responsibility for decisions

_____ **a.** lies with each individual.

_____ **b.** belongs to the group.

Individual ——— **Group**

6. In relating to others whose status is different from mine, I would

_____ **a.** stress our differences, especially to superiors, and behave in a formal manner that would clearly reflect our social ranking.

_____ **b.** minimize our differences, stress our equality, and try to maintain a spontaneous informality.

Minimize Differences ——— **Stress Differences**

7. When it comes to the role of the sexes, I believe in

_____ **a.** male superiority.

_____ **b.** equality of the sexes.

Equality ——— **Male Superiority**

8. I believe the world operates

_____ **a.** in a rational, learnable, and controllable manner.

_____ **b.** in a mystically ordered, fate-driven manner.

Rational ——————————————————— **Fate**

9. I believe that competition between people is

_____ **a.** constructive and healthy.

_____ **b.** destructive and antisocial.

Competition Is Good ——————————————— **Competition Is Bad**

10. Learning should be

_____ **a.** active and student-centered.

_____ **b.** passive, by rote.

Active ——————————————————— **Passive**

By now, you have probably noticed that all the American values are located on the left sides of the continua. Therefore, in order to see how American you really are, just glance back over your "Xs" and see whether the majority of them lie on the left or right side of the continua. Are you surprised to find that you are more or less American than you thought you would be?

Adapted from *A Manual of Structured Experiences for Cross-Cultural Learning* by William H. Weeks, Paul B. Pedersen, and Richard W. Brislin.

SECTION
VI

POLITENESS IS RELATIVE

Scholars have long debated whether any universal politeness norms exist. Probably the only worldwide constant is that every culture seems to value an ideal of politeness. The specific conventions of polite behavior, however, vary considerably across cultures. Even actions that we might assume to be universal manifestations of politeness, such as expressing thanks and giving compliments, are subject to cultural interpretation. For example, in certain languages from South Asia, it would be considered insulting to express gratitude to family members because helping each other is perceived as part of one's duty (Sifianou 1992, 52). Americans also tend to offer compliments more often than Indonesians, Malaysians, and South Africans do. This sets the stage for an interesting cycle. Suppose Americans repeatedly compliment South Africans, who in turn ignore or reject these expressions of praise.

> These rejections seem to compel [the Americans] to offer more compliments, which will in turn be rejected, and so on…. Consequently, in intercultural encounters, South Africans will be judged by Americans as impolite…whereas the American relative excess of offering compliments will also be judged by South Africans as impolite and insincere. (52–53)

Other customs may strike us as the opposite of good manners. In Japan and Hong Kong, slurping one's noodles or making loud smacking noises while eating demonstrates to the host or hostess that the food is delicious. In Saudi Arabia and some parts of the Philippines, one burps after the meal to compliment the cook (Dresser 1996, 74).

In many cultures the giving and receiving of gifts carry great significance, but the rules are culture-specific. For example, in Japan, if you are offered a gift, you should express your gratitude but wait for it to be offered a second or third time before you accept. Then be sure to receive the gift with both hands

(Axtell 1985, 83). Conversely, if you plan on giving a gift to your host in an Arab country, you should be aware that "items depicting animals often have connotations of bad luck"(114). In Latin American countries, you should avoid gifts of knives or handkerchiefs (the former is associated with the cutting off of a relationship and the latter, with tears) (116). If you have picked out a special clock for a Chinese friend, you may be surprised when instead of a hearty thanks, you are greeted with a horrified gasp. In Chinese culture, "a clock is a reminder that time is running out. Each tick brings the recipient closer to his or her last moments of life. To give a clock as a gift is the equivalent of saying, 'I wish you were dead!'" (Dresser 1996, 94).

A definition of politeness needs to be broad enough to cover seemingly contradictory actions. For instance, in Japan and other cultures that disapprove of public expressions of affection, you may never see a husband and wife kissing, hugging, or even touching in public, while in France and other more physical cultures, romantic couples are often spotted in public embraces.

Here is a definition that can take both behaviors into account: "Politeness is one of the constraints on human interaction, whose purpose is to consider others' feelings, establish levels of mutual comfort, and promote rapport" (Hill et al. 1986, 349, as quoted in Sifianou 1992, 82). Now the task becomes how to identify each culture's idea of "mutual comfort."

So far in this workbook, we have examined important concepts relating to culture, practiced taking the perspective of the "other," and begun to analyze some of our own culturally based attitudes. It is now time to narrow our focus to the two main cultures that we will be dealing with in our interactions with Deaf people and in our work as sign language interpreters. The following exercises compare two, sometimes opposing, views of polite behavior in mainstream American culture and American Deaf culture.

15 Your Polite Is Different from My Polite

Directions: Read the statements below and decide if they describe an attitude more often found in mainstream American (hearing) culture or in American Deaf culture. Put an **H** (for hearing) or a **D** (for Deaf) in the spaces provided.

_____ **1.** Sharing personal information benefits us all.

_____ **2.** The "grapevine" shows people care about each other.

_____ **3.** Name-dropping is pretentious.

_____ **4.** Graphic descriptions of bodily functions and surgical procedures often make people uncomfortable.

_____ **5.** Describing your ties to well-known community members can demonstrate your trustworthiness.

_____ **6.** Stories regarding your own and others' illnesses and medical treatments are important to share.

_____ **7.** Passing along the latest news about mutual friends is considered "talking behind their backs."

_____ **8.** Softening a critical comment often makes it easier for the other person to accept.

_____ **9.** If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all.

_____ **10.** Some topics (such as money and bathroom habits) are off-limits in polite society.

_____ **11.** You owe it to your friends to inform them if a new hairstyle is unbecoming.

_____ **12.** If you have a criticism, tell it straight.

Draw lines between pairs of sentences above that express opposite messages. You should end up with six pairs.

Remember that these are generalizations of tendencies within each group. Individual members of either group may subscribe to the attitude expressed by a particular statement to a greater or lesser degree.

Suggested answers to this exercise appear on page 120.

16 What's Your Limit?

When it comes to exchanging information, we all have our limits. Maybe you have a deep, dark secret that you would tell only your best friend. Or there is some information you are dying to know from an acquaintance, but you don't dare ask because you're worried she might become angry.

In many of my workshops, this exercise has sparked spirited debates between Deaf and hearing participants. One Deaf woman complained that her hearing coworker let her go around for half the day without informing her that her blouse was unbuttoned. A hearing man was not sure how to answer a direct question from a Deaf acquaintance about his finances. We have already established the fact that politeness is relative and that a question that would be perfectly acceptable in one culture could be seen as rude in another. The first step is to figure out what our limits are and then to ask ourselves if we are willing to stretch them to better accommodate others' expectations.

Directions: Place a mark in each box: **X** = yes, **O** = no. You may add additional comments such as "maybe" or "male yes/ female no."

	hearing friend	hearing acquiaintance	Deaf friend	Deaf acquiaintance
1. I will inform someone if				
a. she has spinach in her teeth.				
b. his fly is down.				
c. she has a big pimple on her face.				
d. he looks tired.				
e. she looks ill.				
f. he has gained weight.				
2. I will tell someone				
a. what I did last weekend.				
b. why I am late to class.				
c. about my medical condition.				

Continued from previous page	hearing friend	hearing acquiaintance	Deaf friend	Deaf acquiaintance
d. about my recent surgery.				
e. about my fight with my lover.				
3. I will ask someone a. how much she paid for her outfit.				
b. how much he paid for his car.				
c. how much money he earns.				
d. how much she paid for her house.				
e. why he got divorced.				
f. why she doesn't have children.				
4. I will tell someone, if I am asked, a. how much I paid for my outfit.				
b. how much I paid for my car.				
c. how much money I earn.				
d. how much I paid for my house.				
e. why I am not married.				
f. why I don't have children.				

After you have filled out this chart on your own, get together in a group or with a partner and compare your answers.

If you are doing this on your own, take another color pen and circle answers different from the ones you circled. Then imagine how you would feel about this person who would either refuse to answer your questions or else would ask for more personal information than you feel comfortable revealing.

17 Advice Column

Imagine that you are an advice columnist for the local newspaper, a la Miss Manners, the etiquette expert. Readers write in to the paper with questions about what is considered polite behavior and you answer their queries. Unfortunately, your newspaper is understaffed at the moment and so they have asked you to write two columns. One will address polite behavior in mainstream American culture, with the byline of "Miss Hearing Manners," and the other will focus on polite behavior in American Deaf culture, with the byline of "Miss Deaf Manners."

Directions: Here are four letters that you need to answer, taking first the hearing point of view and then the Deaf point of view. In both instances please include the reasons that underlie your advice (hint: your answers will be in opposition to each other).

LETTER #1

Dear Miss Manners,

If I am in a restaurant with a group of people and have to get up to use the restroom, should I inform my friends where I am going?

(on my way to the) John

Miss Hearing Manners' Response

Dear John,

Heavens no! _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Miss Hearing Manners

Miss Deaf Manners' Response

Dear John,

Of course! _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Miss Deaf Manners

LETTER #2

Dear Miss Manners,

I am going to be getting together with an old friend next month. I hear she has put on a lot of weight. Should I mention this to her when I see her?

Weight Watcher

Miss Hearing Manners' Response

Dear Weight Watcher,

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Miss Hearing Manners

Miss Deaf Manners' Response

Dear Weight Watcher,

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Miss Deaf Manners

LETTER #3

Dear Miss Manners,

I just bought a new car last month. My friends have been asking me how much I paid for it. Isn't that none of their business?

Being Driven Crazy

Miss Hearing Manners' Response

Dear Being Driven Crazy,

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Miss Hearing Manners

Miss Deaf Manners' Response

Dear Being Driven Crazy,

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Miss Deaf Manners

LETTER #4

Dear Miss Manners,

My friend always shows up late to our get-togethers. Should I come right out and tell her how much this bothers me?

Tactful Terry

Miss Hearing Manners' Response

Dear Terry,

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Miss Hearing Manners

Miss Deaf Manners' Response

Dear Terry,

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Miss Deaf Manners

Suggested responses to this exercise appear on pages 120–122.

Bonus Exercise: Can you come up with any of your own questions regarding appropriate behavior in Deaf or hearing culture? In a classroom setting, anonymous letters can be collected and presented to the class for responses from "Miss Deaf Manners" and "Miss Hearing Manners" perspectives.

18 Rudeness Is Relative, Too

Because ideals of polite behavior vary according to culture, it stands to reason that what is considered impolite behavior also varies correspondingly.

Directions: Read the statements below. Mark your answers as follows in the spaces provided. If it seems clear that the statement is seen as rude in just one culture, put a **D** for Deaf culture or an **H** for hearing culture next to the statement. If you believe that the behavior would be viewed as rude in both cultures, then put a capital letter for the culture in which the behavior would be seen as more rude and a lowercase letter for the culture in which it would be seen as less rude.

For example, the behavior described in the first sentence, "Refusing to look at a person who is trying to tell you something," would probably be considered rude in both cultures. However, it would be a worse insult in Deaf culture, so the sentence is marked **D, h**. Don't worry too much about precision in marking capital or lowercase letters. The goal of this exercise is to make you think about the relative impact of certain behaviors. Also, many factors may color the extent to which any behavior would be judged as rude, including what area of the country you live in, your age group, and so forth.

Deaf	Hearing	
D	h	**1.** Refusing to look at a person who is trying to tell you something
_____	_____	**2.** Asking someone why she has no children
_____	_____	**3.** Leaving a party without saying a personal good-bye to almost everyone
_____	_____	**4.** Telling someone he looks ill
_____	_____	**5.** Breaking eye contact in the middle of a conversation
_____	_____	**6.** Hinting at a criticism without coming right out with it
_____	_____	**7.** Asking someone how much she paid for her house

_____ _____ **8.** Withholding information that could improve someone's situation

_____ _____ **9.** Surreptitiously watching a conversation

_____ _____ **10.** Throwing a balled-up piece of paper at a friend to get his attention

_____ _____ **11.** Making a negative remark to someone about her appearance

_____ _____ **12.** Arriving late without giving an explanation

_____ _____ **13.** Keeping to yourself information regarding a big life change

_____ _____ **14.** Not commenting on an obvious physical change in someone's appearance

_____ _____ **15.** Enjoying favors done for you by others but not doing any favors yourself

_____ _____ **16.** Implying that someone cannot take care of himself

_____ _____ **17.** Failing to give credit to those who helped you succeed

_____ _____ **18.** Admitting to a friend that you have talked about her with other friends

_____ _____ **19.** Clearly describing bodily functions

_____ _____ **20.** Pretending to be Deaf

Suggested answers to this exercise appear on pages 122–123.

SECTION
VII

DECODING ASSUMPTIONS IN INTERPRETING SITUATIONS

In a workbook such as this, it is impractical to ponder which specific words and signs should be chosen in interpreting the following statements into English or ASL. Too many variables exist, including the situations and the specifics of the clients involved. Given that our focus is on the differences in cultural values and communication styles, however, it is entirely appropriate to examine the assumptions that underlie some typical exchanges between Deaf and hearing consumers. By identifying common mismatches in communication styles and cultural presuppositions and by discussing our options and mapping out a possible strategy, we increase the chances that we will deal confidently with similar situations when they arise during our work as interpreters.

The following exercises can be done individually or in a group.

For the sake of flow, the parties' statements are presented in English, assuming an interpreter was present and interpreted back and forth literally, without making any cultural adjustments.

19 Translating between Direct and Indirect Styles

This exercise connects back to our discussion about direct and indirect communication styles in Section IV.

Here is an imagined conversation between some Deaf and hearing coworkers who are on a committee planning their company's annual picnic. Harriet and Jan are hearing and Dwight is Deaf.

Harriet: Before we start, we need someone to take notes. Since I'm coordinating, I don't want to do it. Let's see, Jan, you did it last time… (pause)

Jan: Oh, all right. I'll do it again.

Harriet: Thanks. So, about the food, shall we have it potluck?

Dwight: No, catered is better. It will be less work and more festive.

Harriet: That's an idea. But we do need to think about how to best use our budget.

Dwight: Whatever we do, just make sure we don't have that pink chicken like last year. I thought it wasn't cooked enough, but I ate it anyway and then was I sorry! I had terrible diarrhea all night and the next day, continually running to the bathroom.

(Harriet and Jan glance at each other.)

Jan: We need to plan some activities for the kids. I had a great clown at my daughter's birthday party last year.

Dwight: How much did you pay her?

Jan: Well, I don't know how much she would charge for a corporate event, but I could find out.

Harriet: The employees could put on a puppet show.

Dwight: That's a dumb idea. Let's have some old-fashioned games instead. That would be more fun. You know, like a sack race, pass the orange, dunk the boss in the water…

Harriet: Well, those are some interesting suggestions. Let's add them to the list. We can toss around some more ideas at our next meeting.

Direct to Indirect

Now let's take a look at each culture separately. The Deaf participant represents the direct approach. Imagine that you are the interpreter in this situation.

Directions: Can you think of a way to interpret these statements that make them a little less direct? There is not just one right answer. Try to come up with a few options. Here is one example to get you started:

Harriet: Before we start, we need someone to take notes. Since I'm coordinating, I don't want to do it. Let's see, Jan, you did it last time…. (pause)

Jan: Oh, all right. I'll do it again.

Harriet: Thanks. So, about the food, shall we have it potluck?

Dwight: No, catered is better. It will be less work and more festive.

1. *I have another idea. If we had it catered, it would be less work for everyone and more festive.*

Harriet: That's an idea. But we do need to think about how to best use our budget.

Dwight: Whatever we do, just make sure we don't have that pink chicken like last year. I thought it wasn't cooked enough, but I ate it anyway and then was I sorry! I had terrible diarrhea all night and the next day, continually running to the bathroom.

2. _____

_____

_____

(Harriet and Jan glance at each other.)

Jan: We need to plan some activities for the kids. I had a great clown at my daughter's birthday party last year.

Dwight: How much did you pay her?

3. _____

_____

_____

Jan: Well, I don't know how much she would charge for a corporate event, but I could find out.

Harriet: The employees could put on a puppet show.

Dwight: That's a dumb idea. Let's have some old-fashioned games instead. That would be more fun. You know, like a sack race, pass the orange, dunk the boss in the water…

4. _____

_____

_____

Harriet: Well, those are some interesting suggestions. Let's add them to the list. We can toss around some more ideas at our next meeting.

Indirect to Direct

Now, look at the hearing participants. They often use a more indirect approach and assume that the message will come across. How could you interpret their statements to make their points very clear and more direct? There are many options. Here's one example.

Harriet: Before we start, we need someone to take notes. Since I'm coordinating, I don't want to do it. Let's see, Jan, you did it last time… (pause)

1. *I can't do it, and Jan did it last time. That means it's your turn, Dwight.*

Jan: Oh, all right. I'll do it again.

2. _____

_____

_____

Harriet: Thanks. So, about the food, shall we have it potluck?

3. _____

_____

_____

Dwight: No, catered is better. It will be less work and more festive.

Harriet: That's an idea. But we do need to think about how to best use our budget.

4. _____

_____

_____

Dwight: Whatever we do, just make sure we don't have that pink chicken like last year. I thought it wasn't cooked enough, but I ate it anyway and then was I sorry! I had terrible diarrhea all night and the next day, continually running to the bathroom.

(Harriet and Jan glance at each other.)

5. Hint: *The glance carries meaning, too. What are they communicating to each other?*

_____

_____

_____

Jan: We need to plan some activities for the kids. I had a great clown at my daughter's birthday party last year.

Dwight: How much did you pay her?

Jan: Well, I don't know how much she would charge for a corporate event, but I could find out.

6. _____

_____

_____

Harriet: The employees could put on a puppet show.

Dwight: That's a dumb idea. Let's have some old-fashioned games instead. That would be more fun. You know, like a sack race, pass the orange, dunk the boss in the water….

Harriet: Well, those are some interesting suggestions. Let's add them to the list. We can toss around some more ideas at our next meeting.

7. _____

_____

_____

Suggested answers to this exercise appear on pages 123–124.

20 Medical Appointment

Hearing Doctor:	You seem like the perfect candidate for this new medication that just came out. It should help lower your high blood pressure.
Deaf Patient:	Wait, I am not sure. My friend took some new red pill for her high blood pressure and she told me it was awful. She had headaches, no energy, and was up all night peeing. My other friend took some yellow pills and…
Hearing Doctor:	(impatient) What I am telling you has nothing to do with your friends.

Directions: Read the following dialogue and answer the questions.

What is the Deaf person's point in telling the story about his friends?

_____

_____

_____

How does the doctor view this story? _____

_____

_____

As the interpreter, what are your options in this situation? _____

_____

_____

(If you need help answering these questions, see pages 66 and 201–202 in *Reading Between the Signs* for a discussion of how the peer group acts as the authority in Deaf culture.)

21 Job Interview

Interpreting job interviews may seem a deceptively simple task—just another meeting between a Deaf and hearing consumer. However, there are several crucial differences between job interviews and ordinary conversations. They are formal, prearranged interactions the purpose of which is to "settle certain practical outcomes. The interviewee wants the job; the interviewer wishes to select the most suitable candidate(s). Neither party is interested in the interview as conversation; rather the aim is to achieve a successful outcome" (Akinnaso and Ajirotutu 1982, 121). If both participants have the same goal of a "successful outcome," then where is the challenge?

The job interview is a key that may unlock the door to employment. However, it is also a "situation where social inequality is ritually dramatized, where basic differences in class, ethnicity, access to power and knowledge, and culturally specific discourse conventions mediate the interaction between the participants" (120). Not only are there unspoken assumptions of shared cultural knowledge and similar discourse style, but the power differences between (most typically) the hearing interviewer and the Deaf applicant have a significant impact on their interaction.

> The most pervasive structural feature of the job interview is its fixed organizational structure and the strict allocation of rights and duties. Basically, the interviewer has power over the interviewee. She or he controls both the organizational structure of the interview and the mechanics of the interaction…the interviewee is more or less powerless vis-à-vis the interviewer, with a role mostly confined to responding to the interviewer's questions. (121)

Given this preamble, we may be a bit more wary of the seemingly simple repartee that takes place at the typical job interview.

1. The Opening

Hearing Interviewer: Did you have any trouble finding our office?

Deaf Applicant: I sure did. The traffic was awful. And then they wanted to charge me $12 in the parking lot! Sorry I was late, but I drove around and around until I finally found a spot on the street. It was kind of confusing with all the one-way streets, you know. It took me longer than I thought.

Hearing Interviewer: I am sure it was difficult for you.

Directions: Your task is to identify presuppositions and cultural expectations for each consumer. Let's start with the hearing interviewer. What purpose, in the interviewer's mind, does the opening question serve? What kind of answer is he or she expecting? Refer to pages 136–138 and 140–141 in *Reading Between the Signs* for specific features of the "hearing American job interview."

_____

_____

_____

_____

Now, consider the Deaf applicant. How does the Deaf applicant interpret the interviewer's question? What kind of information does the interviewer seem to be asking for? Does the applicant's answer fit the interviewer's expectations?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What are the interpreter's options in the above exchange? This question has no easy answer. Part of your consideration needs to include how much responsibility the interpreter has in a situation with different cultural assumptions (see chapter 7 of *Reading Between the Signs*).

_____

_____

_____

_____

Suppose the interpreter does nothing but literally transmit the words and signs to the other party? What kind of impression will each consumer have about the other? In your opinion, would they have an accurate view of each other?

_____

_____

_____

_____

In chapter 8 of *Reading Between the Signs*, several techniques for dealing with cultural adjustments are discussed. Can you imagine a way in which the interpreter could make use of one or more of those techniques to aid the parties in communicating their intentions without the cultural differences getting in the way?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Tough Question

Hearing Interviewer: Why did you apply for this position?

Deaf Applicant: My friend who works here told me that this company offers lots of good benefits and insurance.

Directions: Again, identify the presuppositions and cultural expectations of each consumer. Review the techniques in chapter 8. How can the interpreter utilize "Targeted Translation," "Highlighting the Point," and/or "Identifying the Function" to avoid this cultural mismatch? Consider different points within the above transaction where the interpreter could make an appropriate cultural adjustment (e.g., before interpreting the interviewer's question, after seeing the applicant's response).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

22 Administrative Hearing

Here is a different type of meeting, where power differences and cultural presuppositions still have a subtle yet pervasive effect on the interaction. It focuses on a sensitive issue that comes up often in a variety of settings: the Deaf person's ability and comfort with the English language. So often, the hearing consumer has no idea that ASL is a different language and cannot begin to imagine what the Deaf person's school experience was like. We may feel the need to educate the hearing consumer but be constrained by our role from doing so. It is always better when Deaf consumers can explain to the hearing person about their "first" language or language preference. Can we, in our role as interpreter, somehow signal to the Deaf consumer how vital such an explanation could be?

At a Social Security administrative hearing with a hearing administrative law judge (ALJ), regarding an overpayment.

Deaf Client:	(holding an instruction sheet that he had signed previously) I didn't really understand this paper.
Hearing ALJ:	Wait a minute, weren't you born in the U.S.?
Deaf Client:	Yes.
Hearing ALJ:	Didn't you graduate from high school?
Deaf Client:	Yes.

This dialogue goes by very fast, but there are a lot of important assumptions that are left unsaid. Probably each participant is leaving the meeting with a different idea of what was established. Your job is to discuss the unspoken presuppositions behind each statement from each consumer's point of view. How can the interpreter make explicit these implicit assumptions? For example, what do you think being "born in the U.S." means to the judge? What about being a high school graduate? What is his assumption of the Deaf client's reading ability? Does the Deaf client realize this?

SECTION
VIII

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Now that you have completed the exercises in this workbook, you may have a deeper understanding of the influence of culture on our lives. I hope that you know a little more about your own cultural makeup, and that you feel more comfortable accommodating other perspectives as well.

If your cultural curiosity has been piqued and you feel like delving more deeply into the subjects we have touched upon, there are many books to sample. Below are ten of my favorites that have afforded me quite a few "aha" experiences. They include comparisons of different cultures and views of the United States by foreign writers.

Au Contraire! Figuring Out the French

Gilles Asselin and Ruth Mastron, Intercultural Press, 2001

This marvelous book affords readers many insights into a culture that Americans typically find alluring yet exasperating. Includes an especially perceptive comparison of the different ways that "individualism" is expressed by members of the two cultures.

Caring for Patients from Different Cultures

Geri-Ann Galanti, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997

We can learn a lot from this presentation of case studies involving patients and staff from many different cultures. Topics covered include folk medicine beliefs, variations in expression of pain, and cultural explanations for noncompliance with prescribed medication.

Cross-Cultural Dialogues: 74 Brief Encounters with Cultural Difference

Craig Storti, Intercultural Press, 1994

This collection of seventy-four deceptively simple dialogues between an American and someone from another country demonstrates why crossing cultures has been likened to traversing minefields. It is the hidden challenges that often pose the most danger of exploding in our faces. Cultures represented include Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Hispanic, Arab, Russian, and more.

Cultural Misunderstandings: The French-American Experience

Raymonde Carroll, University of Chicago Press, 1987

An engaging analysis of many potential pitfalls in dealings between French and Americans. Topics covered include different philosophies in child raising, the person who needs to apologize in minor accidents, and the different ways that romantic couples relate to each other.

Distant Mirrors: America as a Foreign Culture

Edited by Philip R. DeVita and James D. Armstrong, Wadsworth Publishing, 1993

A collection of essays detailing foreigners' observations of life in the United States. Looking through foreigners' eyes can help us see things that we take for granted, such as the significance of "potluck" meals, the ritual meaning of Thanksgiving, and the concept of work as a metaphor for defining one's identity.

Ciao, America! An Italian Discovers the U.S.

Beppe Severgnini, Broadway Books, 1995

A delightful account of a year spent in Washington, D.C., by an Italian author. Severgnini's wry comments about the American obsession with comfort and control, plumbers and politeness will bring a knowing smile to your lips.

A Geography of Time: How Every Culture Keeps Time Just a Little Bit Differently

Robert Levine, Basic Books 1997

A fascinating account of how differences in pace and tempo shape our lives more than we realize. Examines the American obsession with "clock time" as opposed to the more flexible "event time" practiced by many other cultures.

Multicultural Manners: New Rules of Etiquette for a Changing Society

Norine Dresser, John Wiley and Sons, 1996

The author, a folklorist and columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*, offers insightful descriptions of numerous dos and don'ts in two dozen cultures. Topics include physical contact, gestures, gifts, classroom behavior, holiday celebrations, and many more.

Old World/New World

Bridging Cultural Differences: Britain, France, Germany and the U.S.

Craig Storti, Intercultural Press, 2001

Another fine collection of cross-cultural dialogues and explanations that focus this time on differences between Americans and people from Britain, France, and Germany. Examines the British class system and emotional control, the French view of privacy, the German avoidance of uncertainty, and the American penchant for risk taking, among numerous other topics.

They Have a Word for It: A Lighthearted Lexicon of Untranslatable Words and Phrases

Howard Rheingold, Jeremy Tarcher, 1998

A unique collection of words and phrases from forty languages that have no easy translation into English. These words represent minilessons on cultural values and will open your eyes to new ways of looking at the world.

SECTION
IX

SUGGESTED ANSWERS

Please note that the point of these exercises is more to stimulate thought and discussion than to find the "absolute right answer."

1 The Iceberg (from pages 9 to 10)

The following items are in the top (visible) part of the iceberg:

1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 15, 16, 21, and 22.

These items are in the bottom (invisible) part of the iceberg:

2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, and 25.

2 Matching Values and Behaviors (page 11)

8 Use of understatement

6 Asking people to call you by your first name

2 Taking off from work to attend the funeral of a cousin

9 Not asking for help on an exam from the person sitting next to you

1 Disagreeing openly with someone at a meeting

5 Not laying off an older employee whose performance is weak

4 At a meeting, agreeing with a suggestion you think is wrong

10 Inviting the teaboy to eat lunch with you in your office

7 Asking the boss' opinion on something you are an expert on

3 Accepting, without question, that something cannot be changed

3 Identifying Universal, Cultural, or Personal Behaviors (from pages 13 to 14)

1. U

2. C

3. P

4. U

5. P

6. U

7. C

8. C

Rituals for lost baby teeth vary from culture to culture. In the United States, we tell children about the tooth fairy, who will take the tooth from under their pillows while they sleep and leave money in its place. In France, children imagine a mouse will do the same exchange. In Norway, children place their lost tooth in a glass of water before they go to bed. In the morning, the tooth has magically been turned into coins. Traditionally in Japan, children went outside and threw their old baby tooth in a special way on the day they lost it: they would throw their lower teeth upward toward the roof of the house and their upper teeth downward into the space under the floor. The idea was to pray for good adult teeth growing in from their respective gums. Today many families live in apartment buildings, but the rule of throwing directions is still followed (Rieko Watanabe, personal communication).

9. C

10. C

In India, it is believed that wearing white to a wedding can bring bad luck or even death to the bride and groom. (Dresser 1996, 64–65).

11. U

12. C

13. P

14. U

15. C
The American tradition of the wedding garter goes back a long way. "In seventeenth-century England, the groom's attendants pulled off the bride's garters just before the bridesmaids led her to the bedroom. The men then wore the garters in their hats for good luck" (30).

16. C

17. C
In Chinese and Vietnamese cultures, white is the color of death and mourning. Giving someone a white envelope with money inside on the occasion of a death is a sign of respect. It should be accepted graciously but opened later (96–97).

18. C
Traditional Japanese foods for New Year's include soba (buckwheat) noodles for good luck and long life (177).

19. U

20. P

5 D. I. E. (The photographs are on page 21 and page 24.)

The first picture is of a male Moroccan letter writer recording a message. In Morocco and other Muslim countries, women are not always taught to read and write.

The second picture shows Chinook women from British Columbia with the wares to be given away at a Potlatch. In some societies, prestige is achieved by giving away valuables, instead of accumulating them. Instead of waging war against a rival, one gives them one's possessions. The side who gives the best gifts wins.

Photo Credits

Moroccan Letter Writer, © 1982, Joel Gordon.

Neg. No. 42992 Photo. Women at Potlatch. Courtesy Dept. Library Services, American Museum of Natural History.

6 Double-Loop Thinking (from pages 29 to 34)

These are only suggested answers; you may have different wording or interpretations.

Incident 1

Specific Behaviors

Ilse

1. requested a single room
2. created rules to divide space equally
3. was orderly and tidy
4. left for class
5. returned to find her dictionary missing

Leilani

1. requested a single room
2. stapled and taped posters to the walls
3. played Polynesian-style rock music
4. entertained several friends at once
5. cluttered up her bed with clothes, etc.
6. took Ilse's dictionary and left the dorm

Inferences

Leilani infers that Ilse

1. is stingy, mean, and obsessed with rules
2. expects books to be ornaments
3. overvalues control
4. undervalues friendship

Ilse infers that Leilani

1. is irresponsible and careless of possessions
2. is disrespectful of others
3. abuses Ilse's books
4. overvalues friendship

Double-Loop Thinking

Leilani's View of Herself

MY ACTION: letting my friends use my books

Is done with the

EXPECTATION: that they will also share their possessions with me

And is influenced by

MY VALUE: friends help each other out

Ilse's View of Leilani

YOUR ACTION: letting your friends use your books

Is done with the

EXPECTATION: that it doesn't matter what happens to people's things

And is influenced by

YOUR VALUE: friendship is more important than personal property

Incident 2

Specific Behaviors

Ginger

1. interpreted a lecture
2. felt nervous
3. rushed off

Fred

1. made comments to Ginger
2. was confused by her expression
3. mentally checked her off his list

Inferences

Ginger infers that Fred

1. thinks she is a lousy interpreter
2. thinks she should quit interpreting

Fred infers that Ginger

1. must know that his criticism shows he cares
2. is not open to improving her skills

Fred's view of his own action

MY ACTION: giving criticism means I think Ginger has the potential to be a very good interpreter and I want to help her.

Ginger's view of Fred's action

YOUR ACTION: giving criticism means you think I am a lousy interpreter and you want me to quit the profession.

Ginger's view of herself

The reason I rushed off was I felt hurt by the criticism.

Fred's view of Ginger

The reason you rushed off was you are not sensitive to Deaf people's needs.

8 Collectivism/Individualism (from pages 51 to 52)

1. C

2. I

3. C

4. I

5. I

6. C

7. C

8. I

9. C

10. C

11. C

12. C

13. I

14. I

15. C

16. I

17. I

18. I

10 Past/Present/Future Orientation

(from pages 59 to 60)

1. past

2. future

3. present

4. future

5. past

6. future

7. present

8. future

9. past

10. present

11. past

12. present

12 The Things We Say (from pages 67 to 68)

1–3 egalitarianism

4–6 doing (rather than talking)

7–9 optimism

10 achievement

11–12 self-reliance, independence

13 risk taking

14–15 problem solving

16 freedom of choice

15 Your Polite Is Different from My Polite

(from pages 79 to 80)

1.	D	Contrasting Pairs
2.	D	1 + 10
3.	H	2 + 7
4.	H	3 + 5
5.	D	4 + 6
6.	D	8 + 12
7.	H	9 + 11
8.	H	
9.	H	
10.	H	
11.	D	
12.	D	

17 Advice Column (from pages 85 to 89)

Suggested responses may include aspects of the following:

Letter #1

Miss Hearing Manners' Response:

Dear John,

Heavens no! Discussions of bodily functions, especially while dining, are considered impolite. My advice is slip away and return to your seat quietly.

Miss Deaf Manners' Response:

Dear John,

Of course. It is important to let at least one person in the group know where you are going when you leave the room. There is no taboo about mentioning the bathroom, it is a normal part of life.

Letter #2

Miss Hearing Manners' Response:

Dear Weight Watcher,

Hearing Americans are very sensitive about the issue of weight. Telling someone she looks like she has put on weight is one of the most insulting things you can say. She probably already knows that she has gained a few pounds and may be hoping that it doesn't show. You may choose to focus on another aspect of her appearance, something you could comment favorably on.

Miss Deaf Manners' Response:

Dear Weight Watcher,

In Deaf culture, mentioning an obvious change in a friend's physical appearance shows you care and are concerned about him or her. Ignoring a physical change, either positive or negative, is considered rude. Your friend may need advice or information about how she can remedy the situation. Better to be direct and speak about the obvious right away, then you can move on to other topics of conversation.

Letter #3

Miss Hearing Manners' Response:

Dear Being Driven Crazy,

Money is a very private subject in American mainstream culture. It is impolite to put someone on the spot by asking how much she or he paid for something.

Miss Deaf Manners' Response:

Dear Being Driven Crazy,

In Deaf culture, information sharing is expected. It is a way of helping each other, especially in the case of buying a new car, when one is expected to bargain the price down from what is printed on the sticker.

Letter #4

Miss Hearing Manner's Response:

Dear Terry,

Coming right out with a criticism can be seen as harsh. We try to be careful about hurting people's feelings if we care about them. Try the "sandwich approach" to giving criticism: lead into the criticism with a softening remark and then follow the criticism with another positive remark. It will make it easier for your friend to accept the criticism.

Miss Deaf Manner's Response:

Dear Terry,

Beating around the bush is not appreciated in Deaf culture. Directness is considered polite. Then there will be no misunderstanding. Come right out with the criticism. It will show your friend how much you care.

18 Rudeness Is Relative, Too (from pages 91 to 92)

The answers below are a guide only. If it seems clear that the statement is seen as rude in just one culture, it will be so noted (D for Deaf culture, H for hearing culture). If, as the directions stated, the behavior would be viewed as rude in both cultures, then the culture in which the behavior would be seen as more rude will be shown by a capital letter and the other culture with a lowercase letter.

1. D, h
2. H
3. D
4. H
5. D

6. D

7. H

8. D

9. D, h

10. H

11. H

12. D, h

13. D, h

14. D

15. D, h

16. H

17. D

18. H

19. H

20. D

19 Translating Between Direct and Indirect Styles (from pages 96 to 99)

The following suggested answers offer only one possible way of interpreting these statements. Degrees of subtlety and directness vary according to many factors such as age, gender, cultural group, and geographic region (i.e., New York City will have different norms than the South).

Direct to Indirect

1. Dwight: I have another idea. If we had it catered, it would be less work for everyone and more festive.

2. Dwight: Whatever we do, just make sure we don't have that pink chicken like last year. I thought it wasn't cooked enough, but I ate it anyway and I got very sick.

3. Dwight: Was it expensive?

4. Dwight: Hmm…I don't know. How about having some old-fashioned games. That will be fun. You know, like a sack race, pass the orange, dunk the boss in the water….

Indirect to Direct

1. Harriet: I can't do it, and Jan did it last time. That means it's your turn, Dwight.

2. Jan: I really don't want to, but since he didn't volunteer, I guess I have to.

3. Harriet: Thanks. So, about the food. Let's have it potluck.

4. Harriet: Catered might be too expensive.

5. (Harriet and Jan glance at each other)

   Harriet: Why is he telling us these graphic details?

   Jan: Yeah, too much information!

6. Jan: That's off the point. Let's keep this related to work.

7. Harriet: I don't think that these are the best ideas we can come up with, but we have more time to work on this later.

SECTION
X

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