

## CHAPTER 1

# Understanding Cultural Metaphors

*The great pedagogic value of figurative uses of language is to be found in their potential to transfer learning and understanding from what is known to what is less well-known and to do so in a very vivid manner. . . . Metaphors are necessary because they allow the transfer of coherent chunks of characteristics—perceptual, cognitive, emotional, and experiential—from a vehicle which is known to a topic which is less so.*

—Andrew Ortony (1975, p. 53)

**T**here are many good and obvious reasons for studying cross-cultural differences, including a conservative estimate that somewhere between 25% and 50% of our basic values stem from culture (for such estimates, see Haire, Ghiselli, & Porter, 1966; Hofstede, 2001). Other aspects of workforce diversity, such as age and socioeconomic status, also account for significant variances in our values and attitudes, but clearly culture is critical.

Failures in cross-cultural communication and negotiation have very tangible bottom-line results. For example, Disney negotiated a very favorable contract to establish Euro-Disney outside of Paris in the 1980s, only to face near disaster because of such issues as the corporation's ban on the sale of wine, which usually accompanies eating in France. The French stayed home or went elsewhere rather than endure such inconveniences. More recently, Daimler-Chrysler Corporation was dissolved in 2004 at least in part because of the cultural conflicts between the German and U.S. executives, including the latter's lack of understanding of the German system of corporate governance. Large German corporations are required to have two boards of directors, the

first of which appoints and has some jurisdiction over the second corporate board. For example, the first German board—composed of representatives of trade unions, employees, large-scale investors such as banks, and government—appoints the second board. A U.S. board, because there is only one, can unilaterally authorize such decisions as large-scale employee layoffs and changes in reward systems. In Germany, the second board must receive authorization from the first board before proceeding with such major changes. Because of the U.S. penchant for downgrading the importance of two boards and the German penchant for having many more formal meetings than the U.S. executives before decisions can be enacted, change was extremely difficult to implement. David Ricks (2006) provides numerous additional examples demonstrating how cross-cultural differences create major and sometimes fatal difficulties in many areas of business.

An even more fundamental reason for studying culture is that our globalized world demands cross-cultural expertise if we are to survive. Amy Chua (2003) clearly supports this point of view:

After the fall of the Berlin Wall a common political and economic consensus emerged, not only in the West but to a considerable extent around the world. Markets and democracy, working hand in hand, would transform the world into a community of modernized, peace-loving nations. In the process, ethnic hatred, extremist fundamentalism, and other “backward” aspects of underdevelopment would be swept away. The consensus could not have been more mistaken. Since 1989, the world has seen the proliferation of ethnic conflict, the rise of militant Islam, the intensification of group hatred and nationalism, expulsions, massacres, confiscations, calls for renationalization, and two genocides unprecedented since the Nazi Holocaust. (p. 123)

As argued elsewhere, there are as many reasons supporting the view that global disintegration rather than global integration may be our fate (see Carroll & Gannon, 1997). We are just as likely to become a global battlefield as we are to become a global village or a global community.

To highlight how difficult but critical it is to understand the importance of culture, it is useful to examine a short case study developed by Martin Gannon. By way of background, he attended a 10-day cross-cultural training program in 1990 led by Professor Richard Brislin at the East-West Center, University of Hawaii at Manoa. All 35 attendees were professionals involved in cultural studies in some way, and they included professors from a diverse range of disciplines and immigration officials from several nations. During the course of the program, a well-known cross-cultural training exercise, *The Albatross* (Gotchenour, 1977), was conducted, which produced a number of insights. Gannon has used this case study more than 200 times in a variety of settings involving students and managers. Readers are invited to read Case Study 1.1 and answer the questions after it before we provide any additional details.

## CASE STUDY 1.1

I recently participated in a cross-cultural training session at the East-West Center, Hawaii. There were six male volunteers (including me) and six female volunteers. We walked into a room where a man was dressed in Eastern or Asian garb but in a somewhat indistinguishable manner; he could have been a king or a Buddhist monk. A woman sat beside him, and she was dressed in a similarly indistinguishable fashion.

There was no talking whatsoever in this training session, which lasted for about 10 minutes. The “king” beckoned the males to sit on chairs, after which he indicated that the females should sit at their feet. He then greeted each male silently and in standing position; he clasped each male by the arms and then gently rubbed his hands on the male’s sides. The males did as the king instructed, but there was some nervousness and laughter, although no talking. The king then bowed to each female.

Next, the king presented a large vase of water to each male and he invited them to drink from it. He then did the same thing with each female.

The king and queen then walked before the volunteers, peering intently at the females. After a minute or two, the king put on a satisfied look and made a noise as if satisfied. He then looked at the queen, who nodded in agreement. The queen then took the hand of one female to lead her to a sitting position on the ground between the king and queen. Next, the king and queen tried to push the female’s head toward the ground as she sat on the ground between them (they were on chairs), but she resisted. They tried once again, but she still resisted. The training session then ended.

**Instructions.** Each small group should appoint a recorder/secretary to report back to the larger group. Time limit is 10 minutes. Please answer the following questions:

1. What kind of a culture is this? Please describe.
2. How would you interpret the differential treatment of males and females in this culture?

In each of the 200 sessions Gannon has held on this case study, there have been about six subgroups, so he has received about 1,200 interpretations of the story. In 9 of 10 instances, the subgroup describes the culture in the following manner: A male-dominated traditional culture, probably Asian or African or Mideastern, ritualistic, and conservative. Sometimes a subgroup tries to identify the religion involved, and frequently Buddhism or Islam is cited. And, although almost all subgroups feel that females are in a subordinate role, a few believe that females have high status, clearly separate from that of the dominant males.

In fact, this is an Earth-worshipping culture in which males are clearly subordinate to females, and the only way to integrate all of the information provided is to use this framework. For example, the male leader was not being friendly when he patted the males; rather, he was checking for weapons, as males tend to have too much testosterone and too strong a tendency to engage in immature fighting. Similarly the females were seated in the place of honor (nearest to the ground), and the males were relegated to the bleachers. The males drank first to test for poison, thus ensuring the safety of the females. Even the “king,” whose ambiguous position is highlighted by the quotation marks, must ask permission of the female leader before selecting a favored

female, who was placed nearest the ground for the ritual in an honored position between the two leaders. Frequently Gannon asks why a particular female was chosen, and rarely does anyone guess the reason: A visual inspection indicated that she had the largest feet, an obvious sign of importance in an Earth-worshipping culture. In many cultures the number three is used, and it was being used in this ritual until the favored female resisted.

This exercise is usually sufficient to make the point that having a framework is very useful in understanding any culture. If the trainees had been told that the culture was Earth-worshipping, they could have integrated the various stimuli that were overwhelming them. Furthermore, the feedback session after the original training proved to be insightful, as the young woman selected for the ritual was asked why she resisted. This young woman was a very accomplished cultural anthropologist who has devoted her career to the study of village life around the world. She was in her mid-thirties, well published, and tenured at a good university, attractive, and divorced but without children. Her response focused on the maltreatment that she had experienced at the hands of various men in her life and on her resolve never to allow such maltreatment to occur again. Thus she had interpreted the ritual as a form of subservience to men, as the “king” was pushing her head toward the ground; so was the “queen,” but she did not mention this fact. The pedagogical point is that this young woman, given her educational training and work experiences in different villages, was as knowledgeable as or more knowledgeable than any professional in the room, but her perspective—warped by unpleasant experiences with men—had led her to react emotionally, even to the extent that she was not able to think about an alternative framework such as an Earth-worshipping culture. Gannon also points out that he felt overwhelmed and had no idea what was going on.

The case study also highlights other critical aspects of culture, which operate subtly, often on the unconscious or semiconscious level. Culture has been aptly compared to a computer program, which once activated by a few commands or stimuli begins to operate automatically and seemingly in an independent manner (Fisher, 1988; Hall, 1966; Hofstede, 1991, 2001). Clearly such automaticity occurred, but unfortunately the stimuli were not properly matched to the cultural framework because of the negative relationships with males that this young woman had experienced.

Frequently, when foreigners violate a key cultural value, they are not even aware of the violation, and no one brings the matter to their attention. The foreigners are then isolated and begin to experience negative feelings. As one U.S. businessman in Asia aptly pointed out, one of the central problems doing business cross-culturally is that once a visitor makes a major cultural mistake, it is frequently impossible to rectify it, and it may well take several months to realize that polite rejections signify isolation and banishment. Sometimes foreigners make such a mistake and eventually leave the country without even realizing or identifying what they have done.

Even genuinely small cultural mistakes can have enormous consequences. Many older and even some younger Germans, for instance, do not like to converse too much

during meals. They will ordinarily begin the meal by taking a sip of beer or soda, then pick up the knife and fork and hold them throughout the meal, putting them down only when they have finished eating. For many Germans eating is a serious business, not to be disturbed by trivial comments and animated conversation. Many Italians, on the other hand, tend to talk constantly during meals and wave their hands repeatedly. As a result, a German and an Italian dining with one another may feel aggrieved by each other's behavior, and much time is wasted negotiating acceptable rules of behavior that could otherwise be spent on substantive issues, including the development of trust.

Furthermore, while technological and societal changes have been rapid in recent decades, many key aspects of culture tend to change only slowly, frequently at a snail's pace, and the influence of culture persists for centuries even after mass immigrations take place. The U.S. Irish have the "gift of the gab," befitting a cultural heritage that has a strong oral tradition, and they are disproportionately represented in fields such as trial law and politics, where this gift is an asset. English and French residents of Canada think and feel differently in large part because of their respective cultural heritages, and these differences have threatened the very existence of that country.

## Language Barriers

Individuals from English-speaking countries are at a particular disadvantage culturally because the people of many non-English-speaking countries use both English and their own native languages. It is common for English-speaking visitors to a non-English-speaking country to assume cultural similarity when dissimilarity is really the norm. English has become the language favored in international business and mixtures of languages such as Chinglish and Spanglish have become prominent, thus creating both opportunities and pitfalls for natives of English-speaking countries.

However, it should be noted that knowing a country's language, while clearly helpful, is no guarantee of understanding its cultural mind-set, and some of the most difficult problems have been created by individuals who have a high level of fluency but a low level of cultural understanding. Glen Fisher (1988), a former Foreign Service officer, describes a situation in Latin America in which a U.S. team's efforts were seriously hampered because of the condescending attitude of one member, whose fluency in Spanish was excellent. Fortunately another member of the team helped to save the day because she showed a genuine interest in the culture and its people, even though she was just beginning to learn how to speak Spanish. Moreover, members of a culture tend to assume that highly fluent visitors know the customs and rules of behavior, and they judge those visitors severely when violations occur.

U.S. Americans are at a particular disadvantage in trying to understand the mind-sets of other cultures. U.S. businesspeople and travelers tend to follow frantic schedules, sometimes visiting Hong Kong, Thailand, Japan, and Taiwan within the space of 2 weeks. To expect these U.S. travelers to understand these cultures in such a short period of time is unrealistic. Even fewer U.S. Americans spend any time residing in foreign

countries and, when doing so, tend to isolate themselves from the natives in their “golden ghettos.” By contrast, Europeans speak two or more languages, including English, and they experience great cultural diversity simply by traveling a few hundred miles from one country to another. Many Asians, because of their knowledge of the English language and education in Europe and the United States, are similar to these Europeans in terms of cultural sophistication.

## Using Cultural Metaphors

This book describes an innovative method, the cultural metaphor, for understanding easily and quickly the cultural mind-set of a nation and comparing it to those of other nations. In essence, the method involves identifying some phenomenon, activity, or institution of a nation’s culture that all or most of its members consider to be very important and with which they identify cognitively and/or emotionally. The characteristics of the metaphor then become the basis for describing and understanding the essential features of the society.

For example, the Italians invented the opera and love it passionately. Five key characteristics of the opera are the overture, spectacle and pageantry, voice, externalization, and the interaction between the lead singers and the chorus (see Chapter 21). We use these features to describe Italy and its cultural mind-set. Thus, the metaphor is a guide, map, or beacon that helps foreigners understand quickly what members of a society consider to be very important. This knowledge should help them to be comfortable in the society and to avoid making cultural mistakes. The cultural metaphor is, however, only a starting point and subject to change as the individual’s first-hand knowledge increases.

Cultural metaphors can be used to profile ethnic groups, nations, clusters of nations, and even continents. We have taken this approach in this book for nations, the base culture and its evolution across national borders, and even for two continents.

## Constructing Cultural Metaphors

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Countless social scientists, particularly cross-cultural psychologists and cultural anthropologists, have devoted their lives to the study of culture. Our cultural metaphors are based partially on the work of cross-cultural psychologists and cultural anthropologists, who emphasize a small number of factors or dimensions such as time and space when comparing one society to another.

### Six Age-Old Dimensions

The first of these dimensional approaches was described by two anthropologists, Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodbeck (1961). They compare cultures across six dimensions, pointing out that philosophers, social scientists, and commentators interested in understanding cultural differences have focused attention on these dimensions for hundreds of years. These six dimensions are:

1. What do members of a society assume about the nature of people, that is, are people good, bad, or a mixture?
2. What do members of a society assume about the relationship between a person and nature, that is, should we live in harmony with it or subjugate it?
3. What do members of a society assume about the relationship between people, that is, should a person act in a self-serving manner or consider the group before taking action (individualism versus groupism or collectivism in terms of such issues as making decisions, conformity, and so forth)?
4. What is the primary mode of activity in a given society, that is, *being* or accepting the status quo, enjoying the current situation, and going with the flow of things; or *doing*, that is, changing things to make them better, setting specific goals, and accomplishing them within specific schedules?
5. What is the conception of space in a given society, that is, is it considered *private* in that meetings are held in private, people do not get too close to one another physically, and so on; or *public*, that is, having everyone participate in meetings and decision making, allowing emotions to be expressed publicly, and having people stand in close proximity to one another?
6. What is the society's dominant temporal orientation: past, present, or future?

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck note that each society has a dominant cultural orientation that can be described in terms of these six dimensions but that other weaker orientations may also exist simultaneously in its different geographical regions and racial and ethnic groups.

## Hall on Communication Patterns

Another well-known anthropologist, Edward T. Hall, has spent more than 40 years developing and writing about a similar dimensional classification system (for a good summary of it, see Hall & Hall, 1990). He basically focuses on the communication patterns found within cultures, and he emphasizes four dimensions along which societies can be compared:

1. Context, or the amount of information that must be explicitly stated if a message or communication is to be successful
2. Space, or the ways of communicating through specific handling of personal space; for example, North Americans tend to keep more space between them while communicating than do South Americans
3. Time, which is either *monochronic* (scheduling and completing one activity at a time) or *polychronic* (not distinguishing between activities and completing them simultaneously)
4. Information flow, which is the structure and speed of messages between individuals and/or organizations

Hall then arrays societies along an overarching high-context/low-context dimension. In a high-context society, time tends to be polychronic, and there is a heavy investment in socializing members so that information does not need to be explicitly stated for it to be understood. Members of such a culture have known one another for long periods of time, and there is strong agreement as to what is expected and not expected. In the high-context Japanese society, there is even an aphorism that expressly addresses this issue: He who knows does not speak; he who speaks does not know (see Chapter 3). Hence, verbal communication is frequently not necessary and may well impede the transmission of the message. Also, members of high-context societies tend to have less physical space between them when communicating than those in low-context societies.

As Hall notes, high-context societies tend to require a strong leader to whom everyone else expresses submission or at least great respect. In the Arabic countries, such a leader will sit in his office surrounded by people seeking his help and advice. He will not address the issues and people sequentially, as would tend to happen in monochronic countries such as the United States and Germany. Rather, he will deal with several issues and people as conditions seem to warrant, going from one group to the other in a seemingly haphazard fashion that takes into consideration their sensitivities and need to save face or avoid embarrassment.

Hall tends to array societies he has studied in the following way, going from high-context to low-context: Japan, the Arab countries, France (approximately in the middle of the continuum), the United States, and Germany. Hall has a bias against low-context societies, even though he recognizes that it is much easier to interface with a low-context society because information about rules and permissible behaviors is explicitly stated. To him, such societies tend to be too mechanical and lack sensitivity to the needs of individuals. However, he does not critically analyze some of the problems found in high-context societies, particularly the overwhelming power of the leader, which can be used indiscriminately, or the in-group bias that hinders relations with anyone outside of the culture.

Hall's system begins to break down when he talks about the low-context way that the Japanese interact with foreigners but the high-context way in which they interact among themselves. Thus he seems to be describing the classic in-group/out-group phenomenon rather than an overarching dimension along which societies can be arrayed. Triandis, Brislin, and Hui (1988) have argued that the major dimension separating societies is individualism-collectivism, in which the in-group and out-group distinction is critical, and this seems to be the dimension that Hall is describing. Furthermore, as described in the various chapters of this book, there are many specific kinds of individualism and collectivism.

Still, Hall's work has been significant and insightful, particularly his treatment of time and space. Throughout this book we will use some of his basic concepts, especially the monochronic-polychronic distinction and that between high-context and low-context communication.

## Establishing Country Profiles

The third major dimensional approach was developed by Geert Hofstede (1991, 2001) and has been independently confirmed and in some instances refined by other researchers such as the Chinese Culture Connection (1987), a group consisting of Michael Bond, a long-time professor of cross-cultural psychology at the University of Hong Kong, and 25 Chinese associates. (For examples of frameworks similar to Hofstede's, see Schwartz, 1994; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998.) Hofstede is a prominent organizational psychologist whose research is primarily based on a large questionnaire survey of IBM employees and managers working in 53 different countries, completed in the period 1967 through 1973. Hofstede's work is especially significant because the type of organization is held constant; his is the only large-scale cross-cultural study in which the respondents all worked for a multinational corporation that had uniform personnel policies. He develops empirical profiles of these 53 countries across five dimensions of basic cultural values:

1. Power distance or the degree to which members of a society automatically accept a hierarchical or unequal distribution of power in organizations and the society
2. Uncertainty avoidance (acceptance of risk) or the degree to which members of a given society deal with the uncertainty and risk of everyday life and prefer to work with long-term acquaintances and friends rather than with strangers
3. Individualism or the degree to which individuals perceive themselves to be separate from a group and to be free from group pressure to conform
4. Masculinity/femininity or the degree to which a society looks favorably on aggressive and materialistic behavior and clearly separates male from female roles
5. Time horizon (short-term to long-term) or the degree to which members of a culture are willing to defer present gratification to achieve long-term goals

A fourth dimensional approach was developed by Robert House and a team of 162 researchers in 62 national societies in the landmark Global Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness (GLOBE) study published in 2004. We will refer to this study throughout the book as the GLOBE study. GLOBE used the terms *societies* and *societal culture* instead of *country* or *nation* to indicate the complexity of the culture concept; in a few instances the researchers sampled two subcultures from a single nation, for example, black and white citizens of South Africa. Based on previous work and their own findings, the GLOBE researchers (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004) identified nine cultural dimensions: uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, humane orientation, and performance orientation. They also developed separate measures for the value or importance and the actual

practice of each of these nine dimensions, for example, valuing equal treatment for all and actually instituting practices that reinforce this value.

## The GLOBE Study

Uncertainty avoidance/acceptance of risk and power distance are similar to their counterparts in Hofstede's framework. With regard to collectivism, they distinguish between institutional and in-group collectivism. In-group collectivism represents the extent to which people are loyal to their organizations and/or families. In many cultures organizations tend to hire only those with whom they are very familiar, that is, family members, members of the larger family or kinship group, and individuals trusted by family members. The employees are typically guaranteed employment, even during difficult economic times, and in return they are expected to work hard for the company, sometimes even putting the company's needs ahead of their own. In many instances non-family members will work loyally for a family business for several years, and in return the family provides the capital that allows them to establish their own businesses. Another classic example of in-group collectivism is Toyota, which retrains workers during economic recessions rather than terminating them.

Institutional collectivism describes the extent to which members of a culture identify with broader societal interests. As a culture increasingly values its institutional collectivism, the emphasis on both the value and practice of in-group collectivism also rises significantly, as we might expect, according to the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004, p. 467). Gender egalitarianism refers to the degree to which male and female roles are distinct from one another, while assertiveness refers to the extent to which a culture encourages individuals to be tough, forceful, and aggressive as opposed to being timid and submissive in social relationships. Thus the GLOBE researchers have separated Hofstede's masculinity-femininity dimension into two dimensions: gender egalitarianism and assertiveness. Future orientation refers to the extent to which people of a culture engage in planning and investing in the future. It is very similar to the short-term/long-term time horizon dimension in Hofstede's framework. Humane orientation describes the extent to which a culture rewards people for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others. Finally, performance orientation describes the extent to which an organization or society rewards people for setting and meeting challenging goals and improving performance.

The GLOBE researchers divided the data from the 62 societies into regional clusters based on prior research, common language, geography, religion, and historical accounts. They arrived at 10 different clusters. These clusters are very similar to those derived by other researchers: Anglo, Latin Europe, Nordic Europe, Germanic Europe, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia, and Confucian Asia. The GLOBE analysis indicated that scores of respondents correlated within a cluster but were unrelated to the scores of respondents in different clusters.

Societies in the Anglo cluster (Canada, the United States, Australia, Ireland, England, South Africa [white sample] and New Zealand) were high in performance orientation and low in in-group collectivism.

The Latin Europe (France, Portugal, Spain, French-speaking Switzerland, Italy, and Israel) cluster had fewer high scores on any of the cultural dimensions and the scores were quite moderate, but the cluster scored low on humane orientation and institutional collectivism.

The Nordic European cluster of countries, which include Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, scored high on future orientation, gender egalitarianism, institutional collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance/acceptance of risk and low on assertiveness, in-group collectivism, and power distance.

The Germanic Europe (Austria, The Netherlands, Switzerland, and Germany) cluster of countries scored high in performance orientation, assertiveness, and future orientation and low in humane orientation and both forms of collectivism.

The Eastern Europe cluster included Greece, Hungary, Albania, Slovenia, Poland, Russia, Georgia, and Kazakhstan. These countries scored high on in-group collectivism, assertiveness, and gender egalitarianism. They scored low on performance orientation, future orientation, and uncertainty avoidance/acceptance of risk.

The Latin America (Ecuador, El Salvador, Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil, Guatemala, Argentina, Costa Rica, Venezuela, and Mexico) cluster of countries predictably scored high on in-group collectivism and low on performance orientation, future orientation, and uncertainty avoidance/risk acceptance.

The Middle East cluster, which included Qatar, Morocco, Egypt, Kuwait, and Turkey, had high scores for in-group collectivism and low scores on gender egalitarianism, future orientation, and uncertainty avoidance/acceptance of risk.

Sub-Saharan Africa included Zimbabwe, Namibia, Zambia, Nigeria, and South Africa (black sample); these countries had high scores on humane orientation and had average scores on most other dimensions.

The Southern Asia (Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Thailand, and Iran) cluster of countries had high scores on in-group collectivism and humane orientation and average scores on most other dimensions.

Finally, the Confucian Asian cluster, which includes Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, South Korea, and Japan, had high scores for performance orientation and high scores for both forms of collectivism (institutional and in-group). They too had average scores on most other dimensions.

The various dimensional approaches developed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, Hall, Hofstede, and the GLOBE researchers, along with similar works of others, have become enormously influential. Relying on a small number of dimensions so that profiles of various societies can be constructed, they by necessity leave out many features of the cultural mind-sets that are activated in daily cultural activities, and they neglect the institutions molding these mind-sets. These dimensional approaches are helpful for understanding cultures and providing an overall perspective on cultural differences,

but an individual will experience great difficulty in applying these approaches to daily interactions. In effect, these dimensions are instructive but somewhat lifeless and narrow in that they leave out many facets of behavior.

## Using Metaphor

The metaphoric method highlighted in this book supplements and enriches the four major dimensional approaches so that a visitor can understand and, most important, begin to deal effectively with the flesh and blood of a culture. While the metaphor itself cannot encompass all of the reality that is found within each society, it is a good starting point for understanding and interacting effectively with it. At the same time the various chapters of the book are linked together through the use of the four dimensional approaches.

Throughout this book we have attempted to identify metaphors that members of given societies view as very important if not critical. However, we needed to identify metaphors that would be relatively complex so that we could make several direct comparisons between the metaphor and the nation being represented by it. Also, we wanted to have a metaphor for each society that would have several suitable features that we could then use to describe it. In addition, we sought to include numerous factors or variables such as religion and small-group behavior when using the metaphor to describe the society, recognizing that some of these factors are important in some societies but not others. For each society we used the dimensions of the four dimensional approaches described above. In addition, we focused on all of the following:

- religion
- early socialization and family structure
- small-group behavior
- public behavior
- leisure pursuits and interests
- total lifestyle: work/leisure/home and time allocations to each
- aural space or the degree to which members of a society react negatively to high noise levels
- roles and status of different members of a society
- holidays and ceremonies
- greeting behavior
- humor
- language: oral and written communication
- non-oral communication such as body language
- sports as a reflection of cultural values
- political structure of a society
- the educational system of a society
- traditions and the degree to which the established order is emphasized

- history of a society, but only as it reflects cultural mind-sets or the manner in which its members think, feel, and act; not a detailed history
- food and eating behavior
- social class structure
- rate of technological and cultural change
- organization of and perspective on work, such as a society's commitment to the work ethic, superior-subordinate relationships, and so on
- any other categories that were appropriate

Using all of these categories initially, we studied each society in depth and interviewed several of its natives. After an initial draft of a chapter was written, it was presented at seminars and reviewed by natives and long-term residents of the society being described. The chapter was then rewritten in light of the suggestions that were offered, and additional comments were solicited. This iterative process typically led to rewriting a chapter five or six times, and sometimes nine or ten times.

## Reading and Using This Book

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To understand the book thoroughly and use it most effectively, readers should understand the rationale behind each of the nine major parts of the book. Many nations can fit into more than one part of the book. We have placed chapters in various parts because they fit comfortably there and are representative of the themes for the parts themselves, as our discussion suggests. The book itself can be used flexibly and selectively, as it is not necessary to read the chapters sequentially or to read all of them. Ideally the reader should understand the material in Chapter 1. The four dimensional frameworks are used to integrate the material and to link the chapters to one another.

Cultural metaphors can be employed to profile an ethnic group, a specific nation, a base nation from which a cluster of nations sharing similar values and attitudes emerges, the cluster of nations itself, and even a continent. In this book, the unit of analysis for each chapter is the nation and its national culture. However, three chapters on the Chinese in Part VIII illustrate the importance of each root culture, not only the spread of this culture but also its transformation as its members move permanently to other nations, and the implications for one specific nation, Singapore. We have also developed cultural metaphors for two continents, Australia and Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, in Part XI. Furthermore, there are two chapters on India in Part IX of the book, one explaining how the dance of Shiva helps to illuminate how the dominant religion of India, Hinduism, must be understood before trying to interact with members of this culture. The second chapter then looks at the amazing diversity in India and describes various non-Hindu religious and ethnic groups and their importance in understanding not only India but almost all nations, if not every nation. Fewer than 10% of the approximately

220 nations in the world are monocultural, and these two chapters on India are reflected in the numerous comparable multiethnic situations found elsewhere.

Two parts of the book are based on the distinction that Samuel Huntington (1996) proposed: torn national cultures, that is, cultures such as Russia and Mexico that have experienced dramatic changes in values at one or a few periods in history; and cleft cultures, or those in which it is difficult to integrate the national culture due to the existence of sharply different subcultures. We have expanded on Huntington's concept of cleft cultures to include those that experience difficulty integrating into a national culture because of geographic differences, that is, the north and south of Italy.

Three parts of the book highlight a framework linking culture and economics more closely. This framework was independently developed by Harry Triandis (2002) and Alan Fiske (1991b). There are minor differences between the two frameworks, and sometimes Fiske does not clearly demarcate the cultural level from the individual level. For our purposes, however, the two frameworks can be treated as identical. From this framework we can identify why we have chosen three major parts or topics of the book.

## **Individualism and Collectivism**

Both authors seek to identify generic types of cultures. They begin their analyses with the cultural dimension of individualism-collectivism, which has been the dimension of most interest to researchers because of its obvious importance. Also, they emphasize the extent to which there is a large degree of inequality or power distance in the culture. Thus there is a four-cell typology of cultures emphasizing individualism-collectivism and power distance. There are two generic types of collectivism (horizontal and vertical) and two generic types of individualism (horizontal and vertical). Horizontal collectivism reflects community sharing, in which members of the in-group share all of their goods, as in a small village, even to the extent that there is no such phenomenon as theft. There is not much differentiation between individuals, and ethics are based on group membership: in-group or out-group. In essence, members of out-groups are viewed as nonpersons.

Vertical collectivism or authority ranking, found in large parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, involves a psychological relationship between the leader or leaders and all others in the culture. Frequently such a culture is symbolized not by the handshake, which reflects equality, but by different forms of bowing. Only a relatively few U.S. Americans and Europeans have experienced such a culture in depth because the relationship between superior and subordinate in most U.S. firms is instrumental and focuses only on work-related goals. In contrast, there is a dynamic two-way relationship between subordinates and leaders in authority ranking cultures: While the leaders receive more rewards, they are responsible for safeguarding the livelihoods of subordinates, even to the extent of finding them new positions when bankruptcy occurs. In turn, the subordinates are expected to be committed to the leader and the

organization. Terminating employees to save money is anathema. Ethics is still determined in large part by group membership (in-group and out-group), and status as signified by family background, position at work, and so on is also critical.

It is important to realize, however, that there are at least two major types of authority ranking cultures. One type is paternalistic and the image of the leader is that of a kind father. The second is authoritarian and the image is that of a leader who is a harsh father. It is sometimes difficult to separate paternalistic and authoritarian authority ranking cultures, but we attempt to do so in our descriptions.

Horizontal individualism or equality matching is dominant in Scandinavian nations such as Sweden and Norway. All individuals are considered equal, even when some are taxed heavily, and it is expected that those who cannot make individual contributions to the common good will do so at a later time if possible. Finally, vertical individualism or market pricing is found in the United States and other market-dominated nations. Although individualism is emphasized, so too is the free market, and inequality resulting from its operation is deemed acceptable. There is, in principle, equality of opportunity and a level playing field, but not equality of outcomes. Ethics revolves around the operation of such a market.

## A Scaling Perspective

Fiske, in particular, relates these concepts to the four types of statistical scales: Nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio. His argument is that individuals have difficulty making decisions and use these scales as rough approximations for determining how to interact with others. Thus community sharing represents nominal scaling, as names are given only to entities (in-group versus out-group). In an authority ranking culture, Individual A may be more important than Individual B, and Individual C may be more important than Individual B, but there is no common unit of measurement. The scale is ordinal in nature. Hence we cannot say C is twice as important as A. In equality matching, the culture has a common unit of measurement, but it does not make value judgments about individual worth, as there are too many dimensions along which individuals can be measured. In this sense the scaling is interval. Finally, in market pricing, there is a common unit of measurement and a true zero point (zero money), which allows members of the culture to transform every other dimension and compare them monetarily. In this case the scaling is ratio.

Fiske provides an insightful example of these four types of culture in his discussion of a small town's decision about the purchase of an expensive fire truck. The issue becomes: Who should receive the new fire protection? The reader may want to stop at this point to consider the matter. The answers are: (a) community sharing, only members of the in-group; (b) authority ranking, all members of the in-group, but the leaders receive more attention and monitoring of their homes; (c) equality matching, everyone is protected; and (d) market pricing, only those who can pay the taxes are protected. This example is not far-fetched. In the United States there have been several

recorded instances when fire trucks did not respond, sometimes because a home was just outside of the fire department's district and sometimes because the owners of the homes did not contribute monetarily to the fire department's upkeep.

In Hofstede's (1980b) original analysis of 40 nations, he divided them at the median score both on individualism-collectivism and power distance. No nation is in the community-sharing quadrant, probably because this form of collectivism is not appropriate for such large entities as nations. Interested readers can view the dispersion of the 40 nations into the other three quadrants by consulting the original work. As the Table of Contents indicates, we have devoted separate parts of the book to authority ranking cultures, equality-matching cultures, and market-pricing cultures.

Part X of the book focuses on the same metaphor (bullfighting) but the different meanings associated with the manner in which bullfighting is practiced in two national cultures, Spain and Portugal.

## When Culture Does, and Does Not, Matter

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The last important issue that we address in this chapter is: When does culture matter? There are times when culture is not important and other times when it is critically important. In this book we emphasize culture, but we do caution the reader to consider other factors.

### Limitations on Culture

Frequently occupational similarities neutralize culture. For instance, when two medical doctors are jointly working on a problem, their medical backgrounds can help them to work together smoothly regardless of cultural backgrounds. Also, similarity of social class can diminish the importance of culture. For example, throughout the world middle-class families tend to use positive reinforcement in raising their children and provide them with opportunities to develop skills and a strong sense of self-esteem. These families may provide their children with music lessons and ask them to perform in front of guests, who respond enthusiastically. Conversely, blue-collar families throughout the world tend to emphasize negative reinforcement and punishment, which negatively influence skill development, opportunities to function in a public or leadership role, and feelings of self-esteem (see Kagitcibasi, 1990).

However, sometimes powerful groups will exclude others from opportunities and then stereotype them negatively, thus consigning them to permanent inferior status. This clearly happened in Ireland and India when the English ruled those nations for centuries. Apartheid, now outlawed in South Africa, began as a reaction to scarcity of jobs and led to the stigmatization of native Africans for nearly a century (see Olson, 1982). If the playing field is level, as is more probable when markets are genuinely competitive, this outcome is mitigated.

At times social class or occupational similarity and culture become confused in the minds of visitors. Some U.S. Americans, for example, complain about the rudeness of Parisian shopkeepers, whereas other U.S. Americans describe wonderful relationships with their occupational peers in France. Presumably what is occurring reflects social class or occupational similarity as much as if not more than culture.

Sometimes the nature of the problem minimizes the importance of cultural differences. For example, when companies from two or more nations are working together on a joint project that their top managements strongly support, organizational members are more likely to forget cultural differences, especially when ample rewards for goal attainment are available, along with punishments for failure.

When trust is present, culture decreases in importance. Jarvenpaa, Knoll, and Leidner (1998) studied 75 virtual work teams throughout the world, which were integrated via the Internet. The major finding was that, if “quick trust” can be established, culture is not a major issue. However, developing trust is frequently neither easy nor quick. For example, a virtual Internet team with members from several different nations must adjust to differences in time zones and the lack of commitment that may accompany not actually knowing the other team members on a firsthand basis.

## The Impact of Technology

One of the most controversial issues is the degree to which technological changes such as the Internet influence culture. As Patricia Wallace (1999) points out, the Internet has not resulted in a global village, as the case is so often stated. Rather, individuals with similar interests—including crime and terrorists—seek one another out on the Internet. As such, the Internet has led to as much differentiation as integration and possibly more differentiation, as Amy Chua’s (2003) book, *World on Fire*, persuasively demonstrates. Still, the world is becoming more flat as globalization has spread and individuals from different cultures are learning more about one another due to increased travel, the Internet, more business contact with those of other cultures, and so on (Friedman, 2005).

But any indirect form of communication such as e-mail presents special difficulties. For example, a high-context and high-level manager in Indonesia became angry when he received a terse message from his U.S. counterpart, not because of the content but because of the manner in which the message was phrased. That is, instead of starting the e-mail with “Dear Mr. XXX,” the writer just started putting his ideas forth concisely and succinctly, without following the protocol associated with authority ranking cultures. As a general rule, technological and economic changes do matter, especially when disruptive of cultural patterns. Still, problems are minimized when changes are introduced gradually and are not directly injurious to deep-seated values. And, as the comparison of northern and southern Italy indicates, the cultural patterns found in the 11th century have persisted into the present, leading to concrete economic differences between these two major regions (Chapter 21).

## When Culture Matters

As suggested in the Preface, perhaps the most interesting feature of culture is that it triggers unconscious values leading to action. Thus it is not surprising that culture is important when individuals must communicate directly. If individuals expect that outsiders will follow their cultural rules and are unwilling to facilitate the relationship by developing new rules acceptable to all, communication is likely to break down. Conversely, a Texan businesswoman was having difficulty in China until she started wearing red dresses, a favorite color among the Chinese signifying good fortune. Business improved dramatically.

As shown in numerous research studies, culture is particularly important in cross-cultural negotiations. Understanding both the similarities and differences of the cultures represented by the negotiators is a good way to facilitate interaction and goal attainment. U.S. Americans, for example, have a reputation for being direct and low-context when communicating information and this becomes a problem when the communication is phrased in terms of “take it or leave it.” Billion-dollar deals have died on the table because of such behavior.

Culture is also important when individuals move to another nation or culture for an extended period of time. The well-known phenomenon of culture shock does occur and, if not handled properly, can lead to major problems. In this regard, it is not surprising that many managers from a company’s headquarters who are sent to work in a subsidiary for an extended period cling to the values and ways of behaving found in their base culture, even to the extent of isolating themselves in “golden ghettos.”

## The Impact of Stereotypes

Culture is also relevant if distorted stereotypes are present. There is some confusion surrounding the definition of a stereotype, but at a minimum it represents a distorted view or mental picture of groups and their supposed characteristics, on the basis of which we tend to evaluate individuals from each group. Stereotypes can be erroneous and can lead to unwarranted conclusions, particularly if no exceptions are allowed; for example, if we assume that all Italians are emotional and talk constantly while moving their hands and arms. In this sense a stereotype is a universal syllogism. In the case of Italians the stereotype is clearly erroneous in many instances, as anyone who has transacted business in northern Italy will confirm; there, the level of formality is frequently high in business relationships, especially in terms of dressing properly, showing up for meetings on time, being prepared, and so on. Ironically, in-group members frequently use universal stereotyping as a form of humor but react negatively if out-group members employ it.

However, all human beings use stereotypes, as they are a shorthand and easy way of classifying the multitude of stimuli to which we are exposed. The issue is not stereotyping itself but whether the stereotypes are accurate.

Most of us take an extremely negative position on stereotyping. It can be very embarrassing to be accused of stereotyping, especially since it is frequently so difficult to refute the charge. In today's world the accusation is frequently raised, and as a result, it has become difficult to discuss genuine differences. However, many social psychologists now take the position that there are real differences between groups and societies and that the negative connotations associated with stereotyping have led us to deemphasize these legitimate differences. From this perspective a stereotype represents only a starting point that is to be rigorously evaluated and changed as experience with groups warrants. Nancy Adler (2007) argues persuasively that it is legitimate and helpful to use stereotypes if they are descriptive rather than evaluative, the first best guess, based on data and observation, and subject to change when new information merits it.

Metaphors are not stereotypes. Rather, they rely on the features of one critical phenomenon in a society to describe the entire society. There is, however, a danger that metaphors will include some inaccurate stereotyping, and we have attempted to guard against this possibility by having the various chapters of this book reviewed by natives or long-term residents of the societies being described. In some instances we were unable to construct a metaphor that satisfied natives, residents, or ourselves. Hence this book includes only metaphors about which there is a consensus.

Admittedly, it is very difficult to test the validity of these metaphors empirically, at least at this point in time. However, we have completed one six-nation study of cultural metaphors and confirmed that they are critical (Gannon, Gupta, Audia, & Kristof-Brown, 2005–2006). In addition, we employ two tests in deciding whether a particular phenomenon can be considered as a valid cultural metaphor: whether there is consensus and whether a metaphor other than the one we have selected increases our understanding of a particular society. Also, we have noted in many instances that not all members of a society adhere to the behavioral patterns suggested by the metaphor by using such phrases as “Some Germans,” “Many Italians,” and “The Irish tend to.” In effect, we are highlighting patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior that a society manifests and that are clearly and concisely portrayed by means of a simple and easily remembered metaphor. In this way visitors can use the metaphor as an initial guide, map, or beacon to avoid cultural mistakes and to enrich cross-cultural communications and interactions. In addition, instructors using the previous editions of this book have received very positive reactions from students and experienced international managers to the descriptions of each national culture in the book. Also, numerous book reviews have been uniformly very positive. In sum, as experience accumulates, the visitor can modify and enlarge the frame of reference, but each metaphor provides an initial starting point and basis for discussion.

In sum, culture frequently does not matter, but at other times, it is very influential. We have described only some of the instances when culture does and does not matter. Culture probably counts the most when there are feelings of inequity (perceived or real) and a scarcity of resources and opportunities. It is comforting to cluster with

others similar to ourselves, especially when we are rejected by dominant groups. As Huntington (1996) persuasively argues, the major threat to world security is the increase in ethnic wars that has accompanied globalization and privatization, and this tension has remained strong since the publication of his thesis (Ferguson, 2006). Cultural differences are especially exacerbated when accompanied by extreme religious and ideological viewpoints. Many cultural problems are solved in the long run through intermarriages and increased social and business contacts, all of which are hindered by religious and ideological differences.

All of the factors described above, and some others not described because of space limitations, are important for evaluating when culture does or does not matter. The position taken in this book is that culture is important and is of critical significance in many situations but not in all of them. Culture also interacts with political, social, and economic forces and is, in that sense, a fuzzy concept. But clearly it is possible to understand cultures and use this understanding to enhance relationships between individuals and groups. Throughout the remainder of the book, we will be employing the methodology described in this chapter to demonstrate how cultural metaphors can strengthen understanding and to show how those metaphors are related to the core values, attitudes, and behaviors of various nations.