



Britain's Prince William and Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge, participate in a traditional Mi'kmaq smudging ceremony at Dalvay-By-The-Sea, Prince Edward Island, July 4, 2011.

# Adapting to Canada's **CHANGING FACES**



**N**ot that many years ago, a white Canadian businessman could predict the gender, race, average age, and even religion of his neighbours, friends, and colleagues: They would look like him, speak like him, and share many of the same attitudes, beliefs, and values. Today, corporations are global communities in which a 35-year-old woman from India might be a CEO, a salesperson, an attorney, or a building engineer.

In the mid 1950s in Dresden, Ontario, black citizens were refused service in restaurants even though Canada had specific laws and regulations prohibiting this behaviour.<sup>1</sup> Interracial couples who married could be jailed for “mixing races.” Same-sex couples hid—and in some cases, still hide—the fact that they are more than “just friends” in order to be welcomed by their families and to avoid verbal and physical harassment. But, in 2009, the son of an African immigrant and a white American woman became the forty-fourth president of the United States. And just as the laws and attitudes against interracial marriage took many years to change,<sup>2</sup> the laws and attitudes about same-sex marriages are also slowly changing. Same-sex couples have been openly and legally married in Canada since 2005.<sup>3</sup> The “other” we thought we knew now defies our expectations. Now, more than ever, we must understand, respect, and adapt to the many others we encounter every day.

Paul Darrow/Reuters/Corbis

## and **ASK YOURSELF...**

**THINK About...**

- 3.1** Our Faces | *How has the “changing face” of Canada affected your daily interactions?*
- 3.2** Barriers to Understanding Each Other | *How do ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and racism affect communication?*
- 3.3** Understanding Cultural Diversity | *Why is it so important to understand cultural diversity?*
- 3.4** The Dimensions of Culture | *What cultural dimensions affect the way you communicate with others?*
- 3.5** Intercultural Communication Strategies | *What strategies can help you understand, respect, and effectively communicate with “others”?*

# 3.1 Our Faces

How has the “changing face” of Canada affected your daily interactions?

Canada’s population is changing and growing. Just twenty years ago only one in five Canadian workers were born in another country. It is projected that by 2031, this will rise to one in three workers. In 1996, one in ten Canadian workers were from a visible minority group and it is expected that by 2031 this figure will most likely be one in three.<sup>4</sup>

## Defining Culture

When some people hear the phrase *cultural diversity*, they think about skin colour and New Canadians. Words such as *nationality*, *race*, and *ethnicity* are often used synonymously with the term *culture*. However, culture comprises much more than a country of origin, race, or ancestral heritage. In Chapter 1, we defined *culture* as “a



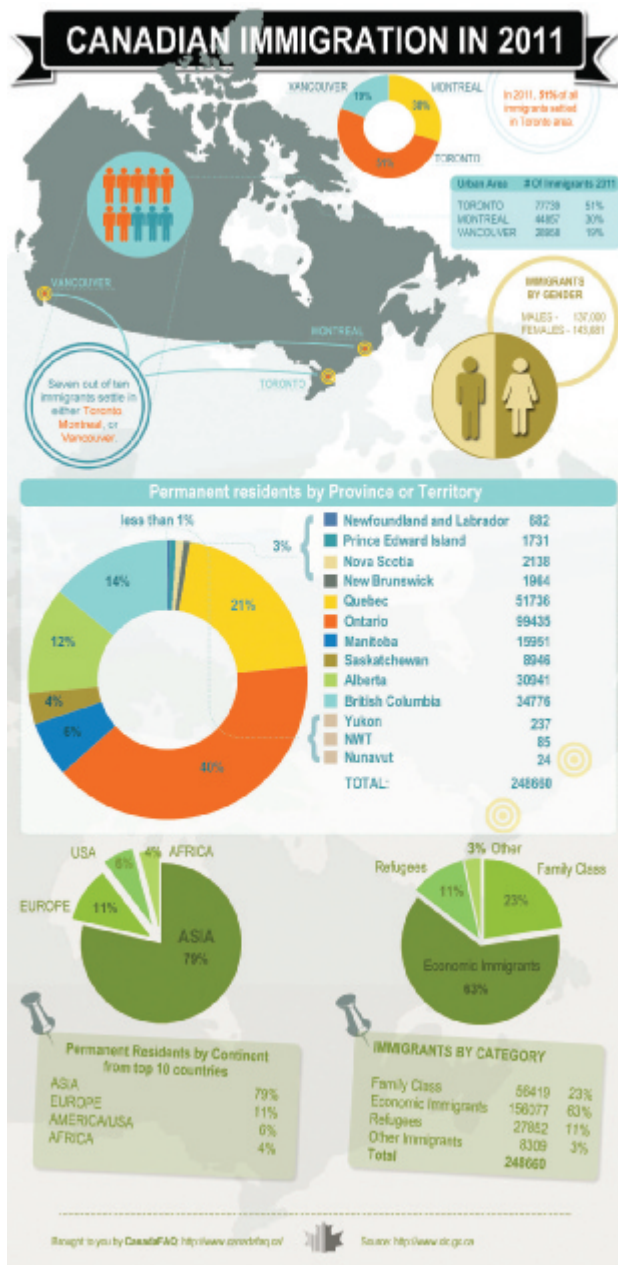
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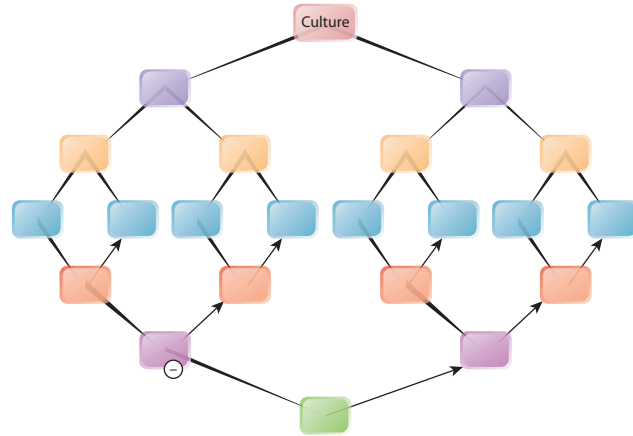


# Communication Exercise

In small groups, start with the word *culture*; then each member should decide on two words that he or she associates with the word *culture*. From the two words, add four more associations, all the way until the web has eight words. From the eight words, choose only four words, from the four words, choose only two words, and then choose one word. At the end, a single word closes the web.<sup>7</sup>

1. How does your perception of the word *culture* lead you to more and different meanings?
2. Does the single word you end with effectively describe culture? Why or why not?
3. When you have completed the discussion, watch this YouTube video and compare your group's ideas with those expressed in the video:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=4484oUqLYYQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4484oUqLYYQ).



## Know Thy SELF

### What Do You Believe Is Culturally "Normal"?

Respond to each of the following items by putting a check mark in the column that indicates your evaluation of behaviours or customs on a continuum from "quite ordinary" to "quite strange."

Behaviours	Quite Ordinary	Ordinary	Neutral	Strange	Quite Strange
1. A man wearing a skirt in public					
2. A woman breast-feeding her child in public					
3. Talking with a person who does not look you in the eye					
4. A woman refusing to shake hands with a man					
5. A family taking a communal bath					
6. A man who stands so close you can smell his breath					
7. People who will not eat the food in your home					

Review your ratings. All seven behaviours are customary *and* normal in another culture or country. What are some of *your* culture's ordinary behaviours, and why might others consider them unusual or strange?<sup>8</sup>

## 3.2 Barriers to Understanding Each Other

*How do ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and racism affect communication?*

**L**earning to communicate effectively in the global village that characterizes our lives in the twenty-first century can be a significant challenge. In order to become a more effective and ethical communicator in a multicultural nation and world, you must recognize and overcome five

obstacles that can inhibit your understanding of others: ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and racism.

### Ethnocentrism

**Ethnocentrism** is the mistaken belief that your culture is a superior culture

with special rights and privileges that are or should be denied to others.

Ethnocentric communicators offend others when they imply that they come from a superior culture with superior values. As an ethical and culturally sensitive communicator, you should examine your own ethnocentric beliefs.

## BARRIERS to Understanding Others

**Ethnocentrism**  
**Stereotyping**  
**Prejudice**  
**Discrimination**  
**Racism**

Begin by investigating how your culture and your culture-based perspectives may differ from others. By recognizing the ethnocentric beliefs that you hold, you will have the opportunity to change

and become more culturally sensitive and inclusive. Then complete the GENE (Generalized Ethnocentrism) Scale at the end of this chapter to assess your level of ethnocentrism.

### Stereotyping

**Stereotypes** are generalizations about a group of people that oversimplify the group's characteristics. When we stereotype others, we rely on exaggerated beliefs to make judgments about an entire group of people. Unfortunately, stereotyping usually attributes negative traits to all group members when, in reality, only a few people may possess those traits.<sup>9</sup> For example, believing that all Asian students are only interested in their studies may lead friends and teachers to hold unrealistic expectations and place undue pressure on students of

Asian descent. Comments such as “Athletes are poor students,” “Old people are boring,” and “Native Indians are lazy” express stereotypical sentiments.

In addition to negative stereotypes, we may hold positive ones. Comments such as “Women are more compassionate than men” and “Gay men dress with style” may be viewed as a compliment but are actually all-inclusive generalizations. Although it may appear that positive stereotypes are not harmful, they can lead to unfair judgments and prevent you from seeing people's individual strengths and characteristics.

### Prejudice

Stereotypes lead to **prejudices**: positive or negative attitudes about an individual or cultural group based on little or no direct experience with

## Communication Exercise

Canadian Rick Mercer discusses Canadian stereotypes with George Stroumboulopoulos in this YouTube video

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3EvS467JK0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3EvS467JK0)

After viewing the video, answer this question: “What stereotypes do you believe that may not be true?”

### The Characteristics of PREJUDICE

- Biased beliefs about group members that are not based on direct experience and firsthand knowledge<sup>10</sup>
- Irrational feelings of dislike and even hatred for a group
- A willingness to behave in negative and unjust ways toward an individual or members of a group

## COMMUNICATION IN ACTION

### How Does Language Shape Stereotypes?

Intercultural communication scholars Stella Ting-Toomey and Leeva C. Chung claim that the nature of our language creates many stereotypes. Paired words, for example, encourage either/or thinking: *straight* or *gay*, *us* or *them*, *female* or *male*, *black* or *white*, *rich* or *poor*, *old* or *young*. Such either/or perceptions lead us to interpret the social world as good or bad, normal or abnormal, and right or wrong. When you think in either/or terms, you may overlook the fact that a person may not be a good or bad athlete, but like most of us, better at some sports than at others.<sup>11</sup>

Highlighting a cultural detail about someone while sharing a personal story can also contribute to stereotyping. Such details are usually meaningless and, rather than strengthening a point, promote a biased view, as in the following example:

Corrine: You know I have such a bad sense of direction, but I must look like I know where I'm going because people are always coming up to me to ask for directions. Last week, I was shopping in downtown Winnipeg and this young—(Corrine pauses at this point to lean in to her friend, raise her hand up to partially cover her mouth, and whisper) *black* guy came up to me and asked for directions to Powell's Books.

Clearly, the point of Corrine's story is that despite her poor sense of direction, people often ask her for directions. So, why did Corrine mention the race of the man who approached her? And why announce his race in such hushed tones? The unnecessary details and the manner in which Corrine expresses those details perpetuate stereotypes. **Pay careful attention to your word choices—what you say, why you say it, and the way you say it.**



Halifax Chronicle-Herald/Christian Laforce/THE CANADIAN PRESS

In 1946, Viola Desmond was charged with sitting in the “whites only” section of a theatre near Halifax, Nova Scotia.

# STOP & THINK

## Is There Such a Thing as Race?

According to many anthropologists, biologists, geneticists, and ethicists, race is “a social construct, not a scientific classification,” and a “biologically meaningless” concept.<sup>12</sup> They emphasize that 99.9 percent of DNA sequences are common to all humans.<sup>13</sup> Extensive research clearly establishes that pure races never existed and that all humans belong to the same species, *Homo sapiens*, which originated in Africa.

Before the human genome was decoded, most systems of race classification were based on characteristics such as skin colour. The genetic definition of race, however, has absolutely nothing to do with any physical or behavioural characteristics.<sup>14</sup>

So what does all of this mean? Is there such a thing as race? The word *race* certainly has meaning and is very real to all of us. Those who believe that one race (depending on their ethnicity or background) is superior to another have an erroneous, misguided, or biased view of race. Rather, **race** should be viewed as a socially constructed concept *and* understood as the outcome of ancient population shifts that left their mark in our genes. When race is viewed in social and genetic contexts, it becomes a neutral human characteristic.



Jenner/Fotolia

How have human genome research and biological studies affected beliefs about race?

## COMMUNICATION

ETHICAL

### Acknowledge Unconscious Biases

The National Communication Association’s *Credo for Ethical Communication* includes the following principle:

“We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through distortion, intimidation, coercion, and violence, and through the expression of intolerance and hatred.”<sup>15</sup> Practising this principle, however, is often more difficult than it seems. Despite claims of “I’m not prejudiced,” most of us have positive and negative attitudes about cultural groups based on little or no direct experience with that group.

Two Harvard researchers, Mahzarin Banaji and Brian Nosek, have developed an implicit association test you can take for free on Harvard’s website at <http://implicit.harvard.edu>. The results indicate that the majority of Americans, including people of colour and other minorities, show a variety of biases they believe they do *not* have. Banaji and Nosek recommend that when it comes

to prejudice, it is less important how biased you are and more important how willing you are to confront your unconscious thoughts about others. When you acknowledge your unconscious biases, you can take steps to confront them.<sup>16</sup>



that person or group. The word *prejudice* has two parts: *pre*, meaning “before,” and *judice*, as in “judge.” When you believe or express a prejudice, you are making a judgment

about someone before you get to know that person and learn whether your opinions and feelings are justified. Although prejudices might be viewed as positive—“He must be

brilliant if he went to the University of Toronto”—they are still prejudicial. Statements such as “I don’t want a disabled person working on our group project” or “He’s too old to understand

barriers to understanding each other

cutting-edge technology” are examples of prejudice based on stereotypes.

### Discrimination

**Discrimination** is how we act out and express prejudice. When we discriminate, we exclude groups of people from opportunities granted to others: employment, promotion, housing, political expression, equal rights, and access to educational, recreational, and social institutions.

Sadly, discrimination comes in many forms: discrimination against racial, ethnic, religious, and gender groups; discrimination based on sexual orientation, disability, age, and physical appearance; and discrimination against people from different social classes and political ideologies.

### Racism

**Racism** emerges from ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. Racist people assume that a person with a certain inherited characteristic (often something superficial such as skin colour) also has negative characteristics and abilities. Racists also believe in the superiority of their own race above all others. In his book *Privilege, Power, and Difference*, Allan Johnson points out that racism is built into the system that

people live and work in. It goes beyond the personal and becomes a pattern of privilege and oppression within a society.<sup>17</sup>

Racism leads to the abuse of power. When racists acquire power, they may dominate, restrain, mistreat, and harm people of other races. In its cruelest form, racism results in the torture, humiliation, and extermination of others—for example, the internment of Japanese Canadians in WWII, the brutality of the Nazis against Jews and other ethnic minorities in Europe, and the genocide in Rwanda in which hundreds of thousands of Tutsi people were murdered by Hutu militia groups and gangs.

Extreme racism can lead and has led to a rise of hate crimes and hate groups. For example, in February 2010, in a small town in Nova Scotia, Canadians witnessed the impact of racist behaviour. Shayne Howe and his partner, Michelle Lyon, live in a small town where Shayne

**Racism is an attitude, a collection of stereotypes, a bad intention, a desire or need to discriminate or do harm, a form of hatred.**

—Allan Johnson, *Privilege, Power, and Difference*<sup>18</sup>

is the only black resident. The couple became victims of extreme racism when they awoke to find a 2-metre-high burning cross on their front lawn.<sup>19</sup> James W. von Brunn was a white supremacist who hosted a racist, anti-Semitic website and wrote a book entitled *Kill the Best Gentiles*, alleging a Jewish “conspiracy to destroy the white gene pool.”<sup>20</sup> And in 2011, Norway’s Anders Breivik justified his brutal massacre of 76 people in an online manifesto that described his hatred for Muslims and multiculturalism.<sup>21</sup>

In all of these examples, the poisonous hatred of “others” reflects the views of many hate groups. “Hate group membership,” writes Judith Warner, of *The New York Times*, “has been expanding steadily over the course of the past decade—fuelled largely by anti-immigrant sentiment. But after President Barack Obama’s election, it spiked. The day after the election, the computer servers of two major white supremacist groups crashed, because their traffic went through the roof.”<sup>22</sup>

Canadian Perspectives<sup>23</sup>

## 3.3 Understanding Cultural Diversity

*Why is it so important to understand cultural diversity?*

Each one of us has an ethnicity, gender, age, religious belief (including atheism), socio-economic position, sexual orientation, and abilities. We also live in, or come from a certain region or country. Consider the following examples:

- a sixth-generation, female, Lutheran teacher whose family still lives in the same midwestern town
- a 55-year-old Jewish male scientist living in Montreal whose family emigrated from Russia

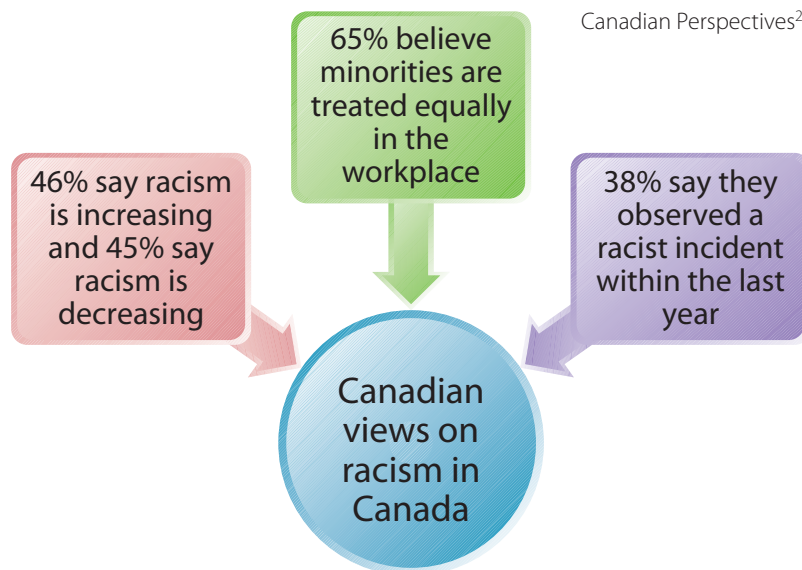
- an Islamic, African Canadian woman working as a researcher for the federal government in Montreal, Quebec.

All these characteristics contribute to our **social identity**: our self-concept as derived from the social categories to which we see ourselves belonging.<sup>24</sup> Many of us, however, although we may identify ourselves as Irish, Korean,

Ethiopian, or Sioux, have lost touch with our family history and culture.

### Understanding Your Culture

Culture affects your life in both obvious and subtle ways. The first step in understanding others is to understand your own culture. You derive a significant part of your social identity from the cultural



groups to which you belong as well as the groups to which you do *not* belong: “I know who I am and that I am *not* you.” This is a thoroughly natural feeling. However, we often divide our world into distinct and very opposite social groups (men and women, rich and poor, black and white, young and old, Canadian and foreign) in a way that sets us in opposition to others. A more constructive approach is to explore your own social identity and share it with people to create understanding and appreciation for our heritage.

For example, many white people don’t think of their behaviour as characteristic of their culture. Because whiteness is a historical norm in some countries, many find it difficult to classify it as a culture. Yet as Dr. Rita Hardiman wrote,

Like fish, whose environment is water, we are surrounded by Whiteness and it is easy to think that what we



20th Century Fox/Everett Collection

In *Avatar*, ex-Marine Jake Sully is transformed from a human into a Na’vi cat person. After infiltrating the cat people to gather intelligence for a military invasion, he falls in love with a cat woman. A “race traitor” to his fellow humans, Sully leads the cat people to victory over the human invaders. Are the Na’vi just blue versions of oppressed people of colour, or do they represent something more significant?

## Know Thy SELF

### Questions of Faith

According to Stephen Prothero, professor of religion at Boston University, many of us are illiterate about our own and others’ religions. He defines **religious literacy** as “the ability to understand and use the religious terms, symbols, images, beliefs, practices, scripture, heroes, themes, and stories that are employed in American public life.”<sup>25</sup> Test your knowledge about a few of the world’s major religions by selecting “True,” “False,” or “I Don’t Know” (?) for each of the items below:<sup>26</sup>

- T F ? 1. Muslims believe in Islam and the Islamic way of life.
- T F ? 2. Judaism is an older religion than Buddhism.
- T F ? 3. Islam is a monotheistic religion (belief in one God) just like Christianity and Judaism.
- T F ? 4. A Christian Scientist believes that disease is a delusion of the carnal mind that can be cured by prayer.
- T F ? 5. Jews fast during Yom Kippur; Muslims fast during Ramadan.
- T F ? 6. Jesus Christ was Jewish.
- T F ? 7. Roman Catholics throughout the world outnumber all other Christians combined.
- T F ? 8. Sunni Muslims compose about 90 percent of all adherents to Islam.
- T F ? 9. Hindus believe in the idea of reincarnation.
- T F ? 10. The Ten Commandments form the basis of Jewish religious laws.
- T F ? 11. Mormonism is a Christian faith founded in the United States.<sup>27</sup>
- T F ? 12. The Protestant reformer Martin Luther labelled the beliefs of Muslims, Jews, and Roman Catholics as false.
- T F ? 13. One-third of the world’s population is Christian.
- T F ? 14. One-fifth of the world’s population is Muslim.
- T F ? 15. Hinduism is the oldest of the world’s major religions, dating back more than 3,000 years.

Answers: All of the statements are true.



experience is reality rather than recognizing it as the particular culture of a particular group. And like fish who are not aware of water until they are out of it, White people sometimes become aware of their culture only when they get to know, or interact with, the cultures of people of color.<sup>28</sup>

### Understanding Other Cultures

If you believe you can live a life in which you avoid people from other cultures, you are fooling yourself.

Religion is also a very important aspect of a culture, but what some

people forget is that in many countries and for many groups, the religion *is* the culture, such as Buddhism in Tibet and Islam in Iran. Occasionally, when religious groups attempt to practise their culture in a secular country, they encounter intolerance. In France, for example, religious attire, including head-scarves for Muslim girls, skull-caps for Jewish boys, and crosses for Christian children, has been banned from public high schools.<sup>29</sup> Regardless of your individual religious beliefs, “you must remember that people feel strongly about their religion, and that

differences between religious beliefs and practices do matter.”<sup>30</sup>

You live in a pluralistic society; the more knowledge you gain about the people around you and the more you learn to respect others, the better you will be able to communicate. On a practical level, your willingness and ability to work in a diverse environment will likely increase your opportunities for success in any career choice you make.

## 3.4 The Dimensions of Culture

*What cultural dimensions affect the way you communicate with others?*

We owe a great deal to social psychologist Geert H. Hofstede and anthropologist Edward T. Hall for identifying several important dimen-

sions of culture. Hofstede’s ground-breaking research on cultural characteristics has transformed our

## 5 DIMENSIONS OF CULTURE

- 1 Individualism/Collectivism
- 2 Power Distance
- 3 Masculine/Feminine Values
- 4 High/Low Context
- 5 Monochronic/Polychronic Time



## Communication Exercise

To learn more about dimensions of culture, conduct a Web search for intercultural dimensions or Geert Hofstede.

understanding of others. He defines **intercultural dimension** as “an aspect of a culture that can be measured relative to other cultures.”<sup>31</sup> His work on cultural variability identifies several dimensions that characterize cultural groups. Here we look at three of those dimensions—individualism/collectivism, power distance, and masculine/feminine values—because they have received more research attention and support than the others.

Hall adds a fourth and fifth dimension: high-context/low-context cultures and monochronic/polychronic time.


### Individualism/Collectivism

Individualism/collectivism may be the most important factor distinguishing one culture from another.<sup>32</sup> According to Hofstede, and many contemporary researchers, most North Americans traditionally value **individualism** while **collectivism**, (interdependence) is valued by 70 percent of the world's population.<sup>33</sup> For instance, once

### INDIVIDUALISTIC

Characteristics<sup>34</sup>

- "I" is important.
- Independence is worth pursuing.
- Personal achievement should be rewarded.
- Individual uniqueness is valued.



### COLLECTIVIST

Characteristics<sup>35</sup>

- "We" is important.
- The needs, beliefs, and goals of the "in-group" (e.g., family, community members) are emphasized above those of the individual.
- Achievements that benefit and foster cooperation in the group should be rewarded.
- Individual uniqueness is not considered important.



### MOST INDIVIDUALISTIC COUNTRIES

1. United States
2. Australia
3. Great Britain
- \*4/5. Canada/  
The Netherlands

### MOST COLLECTIVIST COUNTRIES

1. Guatemala
2. Ecuador
3. Panama
4. Venezuela
5. Colombia

\*Tied rankings.

**Figure 3.1** Individualism and Collectivism

children have completed high school or higher education in the United States, many parents encourage them to strike out on their own—to pursue a career and find their own place to live. However, in many Asian countries, parents encourage their children to stay at home and work until they marry and, once they do, to work for the benefit of the immediate *and* extended family. Figure 3.1 ranks the top countries in each category.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the fact that Canada ranks in the top five in terms of individualism, not all Canadians are individualistic. In fact, many of our diverse co-cultures have the characteristics of collectivist societies. The focus on individual achievement and personal rewards in segments of Canada can make interaction with people from collectivist cultures and co-cultures harder to understand. For some of us, a person's communication style and behaviour may be viewed as arrogant, antagonistic, power hungry, ruthless, and impatient. Interestingly, as poor nations gain wealth, they begin to shift toward greater individualism.<sup>37</sup>

### Power Distance

Is it easy to make a personal appointment with the president of your college or university? Can you simply walk into your boss's office, or do you have to navigate your way through an army of secretaries and administrative assistants? Does our society truly believe in the sentiments expressed in

### HIGHEST POWER- DISTANCE COUNTRIES

1. Malaysia
- \*2/3. Guatemala  
Panama
4. Philippines
- \*5/6. Mexico/Venezuela

### LOWEST POWER- DISTANCE COUNTRIES

1. Austria
2. Israel
3. Denmark
4. New Zealand
5. Ireland

\*Tied rankings.

**Figure 3.2** Power Distance

the Canadian Charter of Rights that all people are created equal? These are the questions addressed in Hofstede's power distance dimension. **Power distance** refers to the physical and psychological distance between those who have power and those who do not in relationships, institutions, and organizations. It also represents "the extent to which the less powerful person in society accepts inequality in power and considers it normal."<sup>38</sup>

In cultures with **high power distance**, individuals accept differences in power as normal. It is accepted that all people are *not* created equal. In such cultures, the privileged have much more power and use it to guide or control the lives of people with less power. In a high-power-distance culture, you accept and do not challenge authority. Parents have total control over their children. Husbands may have total control over their wives. And government officials, corporate officers, and religious authorities dictate rules of behavior and have the power to ensure compliance.

In cultures with **low power distance**, power distinctions are minimized: supervisors work with subordinates, professors work with students, elected officials work with constituents. Figure 3.2 ranks the top countries in each category of this dimension. Despite the fact that the United States claims to be the greatest democracy on earth and an equal

opportunity society, it is sixteenth on the list after low-power-distance countries such as Finland, Switzerland, Great Britain, Germany, Costa Rica, Australia, the Netherlands, and Canada.<sup>39</sup>

Power distance has enormous implications for communication. For example, in Australia (a low-power-distance country), students and professors are often on a first-name basis, and lively class discussions are the norm. However, in Malaysia (a high-power-distance country), students show up and are seated *before* class begins; almost no one comes late. Students are polite and appreciative but rarely challenge a professor's claims. In a high-power-distance culture, you do not openly disagree with teachers, elders, bosses, law enforcement officials, or government agents.

If you compare Figures 3.1 and 3.2, you will notice a strong correlation between collectivism and high power distance and between individualism and low power distance. If you are individualistic and strongly encouraged to express your own opinion, you are more willing to challenge authority. If, on the other hand, your culture is collectivist and your personal opinion is subordinate to the welfare of others, you are less likely to challenge the collective authority of your family, your employer, or your government.

### Masculine/Feminine Values

Hofstede uses the terms *masculine* and *feminine* to describe whether masculine or feminine traits are *valued* by a culture. The terms are used to describe a societal perspective rather than individuals.

In **masculine societies**, men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. In **feminine societies**, gender roles overlap: Both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.<sup>40</sup> Figure 3.3 ranks countries in terms of masculine/feminine values.<sup>41</sup>

Hofstede ranks Canada as slightly more masculine in terms of values but

still less masculine than Australia, New Zealand, and Greece. In masculine societies, personal success, competition, assertiveness, and strength are admired. Unselfishness and nurturing may be seen as weaknesses or feminine. Although women have come a long way from the rigid roles of past centuries, they have miles to go before they achieve genuine equality in cultures with high masculine values.

### High/Low Context

In Chapter 1, we defined *context* as the psychosocial, logistical, and interactional environment in which communication occurs. Edward T. Hall sees context as the information that surrounds an event, inextricably bound up with the meaning of the event. He claims that a message's context—in and of itself—may hold more meaning than the actual words in a message.<sup>42</sup> Like Hofstede's dimensions, we can

place cultures on a continuum from high context to low context.

In a **high-context culture**, very little meaning is expressed through words. In contrast, gestures, silence, and facial expressions, as well as the relationships among communicators, have meaning. In high-context cultures, meaning can also be conveyed through status (age, gender, education, family background, title, and affiliations) and through an individual's informal network of friends and associates.

In a **low-context culture**, meaning is expressed primarily through language. As members of a low-context culture, people in North America tend to speak more, speak more loudly, and speak more rapidly than a person from a high-context culture. Americans and Canadians “speak up,” “spell it out,” “just say no,” and “speak our mind.” Figure 3.4 contrasts the characteristics of high- and low-context cultures.<sup>43</sup>

High-context communication usually occurs in collectivist cultures in which members share similar attitudes, beliefs, and values. As a result, spoken communication can be indirect, implied, or vague because everyone *gets* the meaning by understanding the context, the person's nonverbal behaviour, and the significance of the communicator's status.



Mikhail Kozlovsky/ITAR-TASS Photo Agency/Alamy

Visiting dignitaries congratulate newlyweds at an Islamic mosque. How does Secretary Clinton demonstrate her understanding and respect for this country and its people's values?

#### COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST MASCULINE VALUES

1. Japan
- \*2/3. Austria/Venezuela
- \*4/5. Italy/Switzerland

#### COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST FEMININE VALUES

1. Sweden
2. Norway
3. The Netherlands
4. Denmark
- \*5/6. Costa Rica/Yugoslavia (now the republics of Serbia and Montenegro)

\*Tied rankings.

Figure 3.3 Masculine and Feminine Values

# FACTS **THINK** ABOUT THEORY

TEST IDEA PLAN  
TEST EXPERIMENT  
METHOD  
KNOWLEDGE

## Muted Group Theory

Cheris Kramarae's **muted group theory** observes that powerful, wealthy groups at the top of a society determine who will communicate and be listened to. For this reason, women, the poor, and people of colour may have trouble participating and being heard.<sup>44</sup> The following three assumptions in muted group theory explain how women's voices are subdued or silenced in many cultures:

1 Women perceive the world differently than men because of tradi-

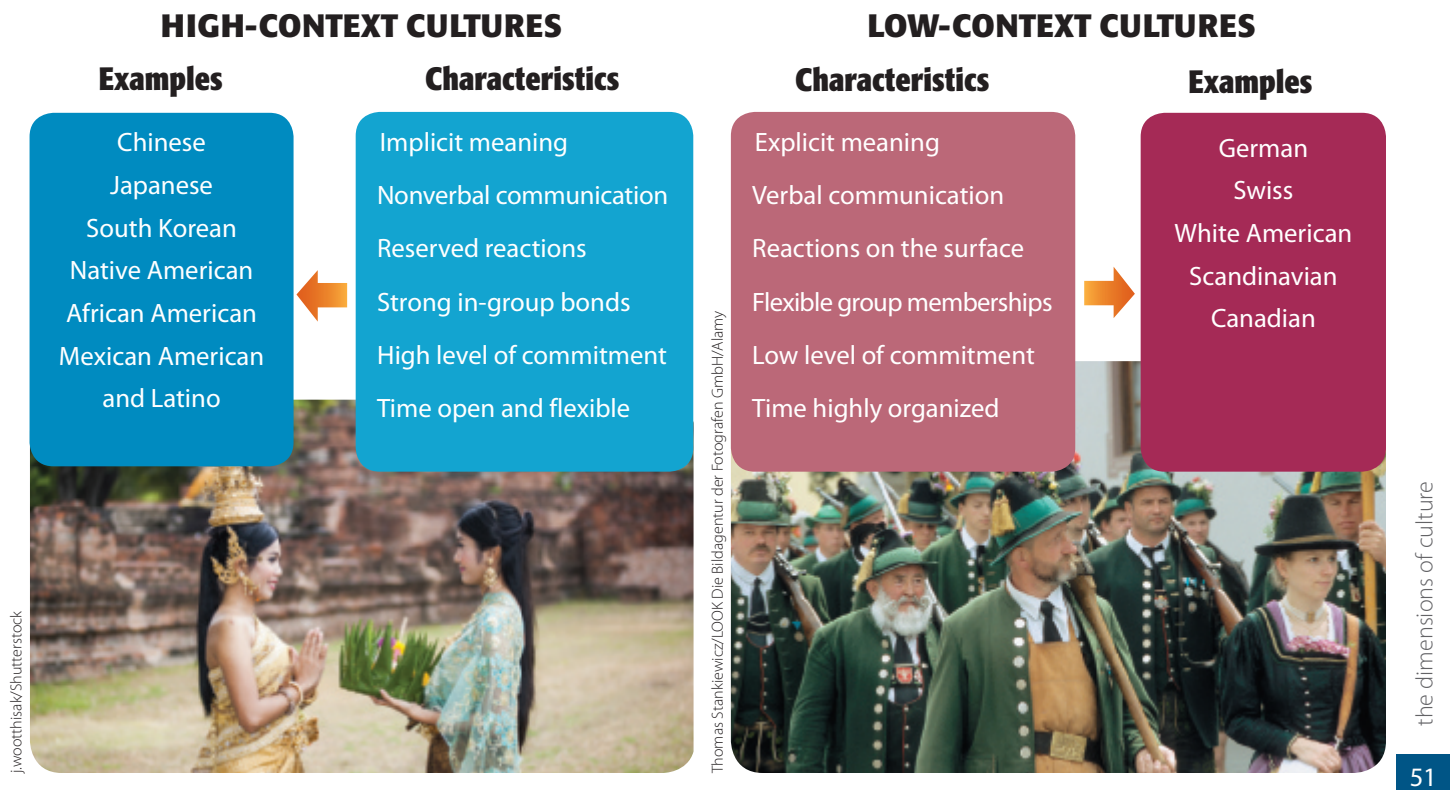
- tional divisions of labour. Examples: homemaker versus breadwinner, nurses versus doctors.
- 2 Women's freedom of expression is limited by men's dominance in relationships and institutions. Examples: Women in Canada only gained the right to vote in federal elections in 1919. The "glass ceiling" still prevents women from achieving professional goals.
- 3 Women must transform their thinking and behaviour to participate fully in society. Example: Women have become politically active and even militant to make sure that sexual harassment, date and marital rape, and spousal abuse are seen as serious crimes rather than practices that may be excused or tolerated.

Although muted group theory focuses on women, its assumptions apply to many groups. The voices of people of colour, recent immigrants, the disabled, and the poor are also muted.



Kapil Sethi/AP Photos

**Figure 3.4** Characteristics and Examples of High- and Low-Context Cultures



the dimensions of culture

Shirley van der Veur, a former Peace Corps volunteer and now a university professor, relates the following illustration of this concept: A scholar from Kenya was invited to dinner at an American colleague's home. Even though he ate ravenously, not leaving a morsel of food on his plate, the American hosts were not convinced that he liked his dinner because he had not *said* so. In Kenya, if his hosts saw him appreciatively eating his meal, they would know that he was enjoying it without necessarily needing him to express his pleasure verbally.<sup>45</sup>

### Monochronic/Polychronic Time

In most parts of northern Europe and North America, time is a very valuable commodity. As a result, we fill our days and nights with multiple commitments and live a fast-paced life. However, the pace of life in India, Kenya, and Argentina, for example, is driven less by a need to “get things done” than by

a sense of participation in events that create their own rhythm.<sup>46</sup>

Edward T. Hall classifies time as a form of communication and claims that cultures treat time in one of two ways: as monochronic or polychronic.<sup>47</sup> In **monochronic time**, or M-time, events are scheduled as separate items—one thing at a time. M-time people like to concentrate on one job before moving to another and may become irritated when someone in a meeting brings up a personal topic unrelated to the purpose of the meeting.

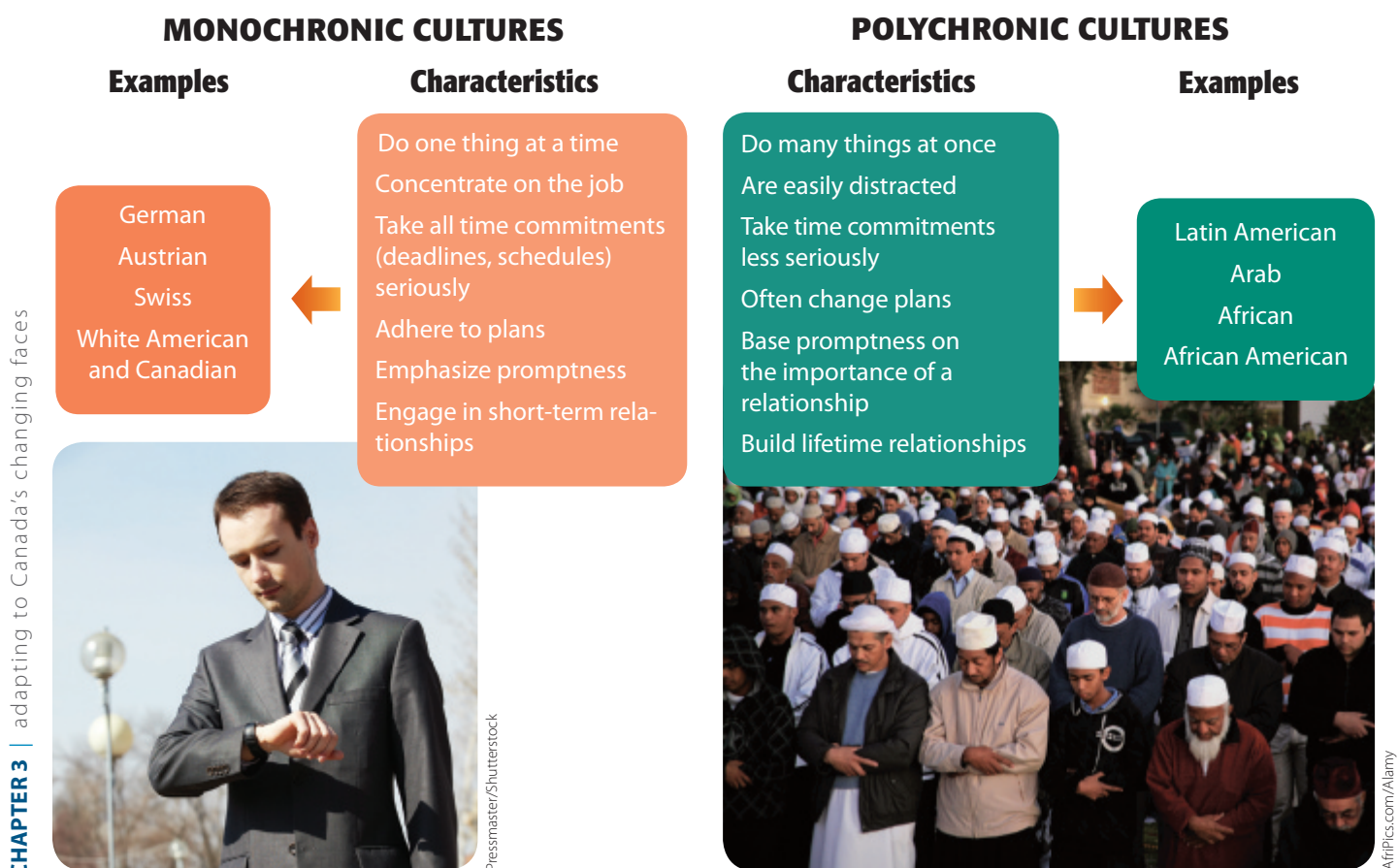
In **polychronic time**, or P-time, schedules are not as important and are frequently broken. People in polychronic cultures are not slaves to time and are easily distracted and tolerant of interruptions. P-time people are frequently late for appointments or may not show up at all.<sup>48</sup> If you are a P-time person, you probably find it stimulating to think about several different problems at the same time and feel comfortable

holding two or three conversations simultaneously.

Hall maintains that these two time orientations are incompatible. When monochronic and polychronic people interact, the results can be frustrating. Hall notes that monochronic North Americans become distressed by how polychronic people treat appointments. Being on time in some countries simply doesn't have the same significance as it does in Canada. For P-time people, schedules and commitments, particularly plans for the future, are not firm, and even important plans may change right up to the last minute.<sup>49</sup>

If you are an M-time person, you can try to modify and relax your obsession with time and scheduling. If you are a P-time person, you can do your best to respect and adapt to a monochronic person's need for careful scheduling and promptness. Figure 3.5 depicts several differences between monochronic and polychronic perspectives and cultures.

Figure 3.5 Monochronic and Polychronic Time: Characteristics and Cultures



# 3.5 Intercultural Communication Strategies

*What strategies can help you understand, respect, and effectively communicate with “others”?*

In our increasingly global world, simply learning about people from different cultures is not enough; instead we must find ways to embrace our differences and similarities and build the skills and attitudes needed to effectively communicate within and beyond our own cultural communities.

## Be Mindful

Mindfulness is both a very old and a very new concept. The ancient concept can be traced back to the first millennium B.C.E. to the foothills of the Himalayas, when it is believed that Buddha attained enlightenment through mindfulness.<sup>50</sup> **Mindfulness** involves being fully aware of the present moment without making hasty judgments.

Before explaining mindfulness in more detail, let’s take a look at its opposite: **mindlessness**. **Mindlessness** occurs when you allow rigid categories and false distinctions to become habits of thought and behaviour.<sup>51</sup> For example, you approach a sales counter and say, “Excuse me” to the salesperson. Why did you say that? Did you really mean to beg his or her pardon, or were you apologizing for interrupting someone who should have been paying more attention to you in the first place? All of us engage in some mindless behaviour without any serious consequences. But when mindlessness occurs in a sensitive situation, the results can be detrimental to a relationship or damaging to an important project. For example, after the 9/11 tragedy, many patriotic Muslim Americans suffered mindless stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination as a result of a larger ignorance about the Islamic faith and culture. If you are mindless, you are trapped in an inflexible, biased world in which

your religion is always right and good; people from other cultures are inferior and untrustworthy; boys will always be boys, and girls will always be girls; and change is a terrible and scary thing.<sup>52</sup>

**Mindfulness**, in contrast, requires paying attention to how you and another person communicate. It asks you to observe what is happening as it happens, without forming opinions or taking sides as you learn more about someone else.<sup>53</sup> When you are mindful, you recognize stereotypical thinking and prejudices and try to overcome them. Mindfulness gives you the freedom and motivation to understand, respect, and adapt to others.

### Be Receptive to New Information

Mindful communicators learn more about others and their cultures by being open to new information. Too often, we dismiss another person’s belief or behaviour as irrational or bizarre when more information about that belief or behaviour would help

**Mindful communicators understand what they experience inside themselves (body, mind, heart, spirit) and pay full attention to what is happening around them (people, the natural world, surroundings, events).<sup>54</sup>**

us understand it. Once you learn why observant Muslims and Jews won’t eat pork products or why Hindus won’t eat the meat of sacred cows even under famine conditions, you have the opportunity to become more mindful and tolerant of their customs. Canadian First Nations elder Albert Marshall describes this concept as **Etuaptmumk** (two-eyed seeing), which occurs when we look with one “eye” toward the Aboriginal ways of learning and with the other “eye” to the Western knowledge. This ability to see from two-eyes or perspectives is beneficial to everyone because it weaves together multiple views to create deeper understanding and knowledge.<sup>55</sup>

**Respect Others’ Perspectives** In addition to being open to new information, mindful communicators are open to other points of view. Psychologist Richard Nisbett credits a graduate student from China with helping him understand such differences. When he and the student were trying to work and communicate with each other, his Chinese student said, “You know, the difference between you and me is that I know the world is a circle, and you think it’s a line. The Chinese believe in constant change, but with things always moving back to some prior state. . . . Westerners live in a simpler world . . . and they think they can control events because they know the rules that govern the behaviour of objects.”<sup>56</sup>

When you cling to one way of seeing a person or interpreting an event, you have stopped being mindful. Every idea, person, and object, can be many things depending on the perspective from which it is viewed.

intercultural communication strategies

← **RANGE OF THINKING** →

**WESTERN**

- Focuses on discovering the basic and predictable nature of objects and events
- Tries to control objects, events, and environments
- Puts things in discrete categories
- Uses formal logical rules
- Insists on the correctness of one belief vs. another

**EAST ASIAN**

- Focuses on the interacting, unpredictable relationships among events
- Doubts that objects, events, and environments are controllable
- Describes relationships and connections, not categories
- Accepts contradictions and dissimilar beliefs

## COMMUNICATION & CULTURE

### WHY DON'T HUNGRY HINDUS EAT SACRED COWS?

Among India's Hindus, cows are a sacred symbol of life. There is no greater sacrilege for a Hindu than killing a cow. At first, this belief may seem irrational, particularly in light of India's food shortage and poverty. If you have visited or seen pictures of India, you've seen cows wandering city streets and sidewalks, highways and railroad tracks, gardens, and agricultural fields. You've also seen pictures of extreme poverty and hunger.

In his book *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches: The Riddles of Culture*, Marvin Harris offers an explanation for Hindus' treatment of cows.<sup>57</sup> Cows give birth to oxen, which are the principal source for ploughing fields. Unfortunately, there are too few oxen for India's 60 million farms. Without oxen to plough fields, farmers cannot farm; food shortages result, and people go hungry.



JeremyRichards/Fotolia

If you kill a cow, you eliminate your source of oxen. During the worst famines, killing a cow only provides temporary relief. Once a cow is killed, there will be no more oxen to plough the field in future years. The long-term effect may be a much more devastating famine. Harris offers this conclusion:

What I am saying is that cow love is an active element in a complex, finely articulated material and cultural order. Cow love mobilizes the latent capacity of human beings to persevere in

a low-energy ecosystem in which there is little room for waste or indolence.<sup>58</sup>

In light of Harris's anthropological explanation, you can begin to understand and respect why hungry peasants in India refuse to eat the cows that surround them.

A cow is steak to a rancher, a sacred creature to a Hindu, a collection of genes and proteins to a biologist, and a mistreated animal to members of PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals).<sup>59</sup>

## Adapt to Others

You probably feel most comfortable when you “fit in” with the people around you. To fit in, you may modify the way you talk to family members, friends, colleagues, authority figures, and strangers. For example, two people may be from different areas of the country, one from St. John’s and the other from Whitehorse. When they go “home,” their dialects, vocabulary, sentence structure, rate of speech, and even volume change to accommodate their home culture. Yet, in professional settings, their speech may be more formal in style and substance.

Professor Howard Giles explores these adaptive tendencies in **communication accommodation theory**,<sup>60</sup> which states that in every communication situation, we compare ourselves with speakers from other groups. If we believe that another group has more power or has desirable characteristics, we tend to “accommodate” or “adapt” our conversations to the accepted speech behaviours and norms of that group. The following ideas are central to communication accommodation theory:

1. *Communication similarities and differences exist between participants in*

*all conversations.* Whether you talk to an international student or your grandmother, you will encounter differences.

2. *The manner in which we perceive the communication of others will determine how we evaluate our interaction with others.* Effective communicators avoid stereotyping by carefully listening to others and attentively observing what they do.
3. *Language and behaviour convey information about social status and group membership.* Usually, the person or group with more status and power establishes the “accepted” type of talk and behaviour. For example, if during a job interview the interviewer’s behaviour is very formal, you are likely to be more formal in your behaviour.
4. *Accommodation varies in its degree of appropriateness, and there are norms that guide the accommodation process.* When a situation is awkward, you will try to accommodate (adapt) the behaviour of the group in that situation. Thus, if you interact with a culture that respects its elders; you may hesitate questioning the views of an older person or senior official. Or when you learn that a particular behaviour is *inappropriate*, you will not engage in that behaviour. For example, if you and your colleagues are on a deadline for group work and they decide to leave the meeting before they complete the project, you may not leave with them.

## Actively Engage Others

Direct, face-to-face interaction with people from culturally diverse backgrounds benefits everyone. You and others may transform and let go of long-held negative beliefs about each other’s cultures into understanding and acceptance.

One of the most interesting and exciting ways to actively engage others is to explore your community. Canada has a rich, vibrant cultural mosaic that provides opportunities to meet, learn about and understand people from many countries. Traveling abroad is just as engaging and has long-term benefits. A survey of students who studied abroad found a positive link to career success, a more tolerant worldview, and increased self-confidence. When questioned about their intercultural development and understanding, 98 percent reported that study abroad helped them to better understand their own cultural values and biases.<sup>61</sup> Combining domestic and global exploration and travel helps you to become a true global citizen, capable of effectively communicating with all people.

If you succeed in minimizing your level of anxiety and uncertainty when encountering others, you may discover new worlds with fascinating people who can enrich your life. The fact is, regardless of culture, nationality, gender, religion, age, and ability, all of us share the traits unique to the amazing human condition.



# COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT

## Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)



Milton J. Bennett developed this DMIS model after many years of observing how people dealt with cultural differences.<sup>62</sup> The DMIS considers six distinct stages that occur as we develop intercultural sensitivity.

Denial	At this stage, people avoid noticing or acknowledging cultural differences.
Defense	On the one hand, this involves focusing only on the common characteristics of all humans. The opposite response involves attempting to correct stereotypes and failed attempts at multiculturalization of communities.
Minimization	This occurs when you become immersed in another culture for a limited amount of time. It can be misinterpreted as cultural sensitivity, but in reality lacks depth of understanding. An example of this can be found in some exchange student programs.
Acceptance	This takes place when you are able to understand another culture and use that knowledge and skill in culturally appropriate contexts. You are able to value another culture and acknowledge the levels of complexity within that culture.
Adaptation	This is a big shift in both understanding and actions. When you adapt, you keep your beliefs and values and add to these the parts of other cultures' values and beliefs that fit within your life. Becoming authentic in your sensitivity occurs when you broaden your definition of who you are.
Integration	The ability to see people, cultures, and world contexts through a variety of perspectives. You are able to move easily with confidence and sensitivity between various cultures.

Read each of the following statements and decide which stage of the DMIS is being described.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I know a lot about foreign countries and cultures.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. If they don't want to be Canadian, they should just go back home!
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. It makes sense to learn about the people, cultures, and customs of the society before visiting another country.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. All families want the same things for their children.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I am a global citizen in my beliefs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I don't see any differences; live and let live is my motto.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The people of the Caribbean share the same customs, whether they are from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, or Haiti.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The more time I spend with my group member from India, the more I am able to see things from her perspective.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. It is important to share Canadian values, customs, and beliefs and to understand the values, beliefs, and customs of the new immigrant family when working alongside them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. How they parent their children is wrong. We should do something to make them more Canadian.

Answers: (1) minimize, (2) denial, (3) acceptance, (4) minimize, (5) acceptance, (6) denial, (7) defense, (8) adaptation, (9) integration, (10) denial.

# SUMMARY

## 3.1 Our Faces

How has the “changing face” of Canada affected your daily interactions?

- Effective communicators learn how to understand, respect, and adapt to cultural diversity.
- By 2031, one in three workers in Canada will be from a visible minority.
- Culture is a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, and norms that affect the behaviours of a relatively large group of people.
- Co-cultures exist within the mainstream of society yet remain connected to one another through their cultural heritage.

## 3.2 Barriers to Understanding Others

How do **ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and racism** affect communication?

- Ethnocentrism is a belief that your culture is superior to others; stereotypes are generalizations about a group of people that oversimplify their characteristics.
- Stereotypes lead to prejudices, which can be perceived as positive or negative attitudes about an individual or cultural group based on little or no direct experience.
- Prejudice leads to discrimination, the exclusion of groups of people from opportunities granted to others.
- In the extreme, prejudice and discrimination lead to racism, which justifies dominating and mistreating people of other races.

## 3.3 Understanding Cultural Diversity

Why is it so important to understand cultural diversity?

- When we view race as a socially constructed concept, it becomes a very neutral and natural characteristic.
- Many people are not literate about others’ religions or about their own religion. This lack of knowledge can affect their ability to communicate effectively with others.

## 3.4 The Dimensions of Culture

What cultural dimensions affect the way you communicate with others?

- The individualism/collectivism cultural dimension contrasts independence and personal achievement with interdependence and group values.
- The power distance cultural dimension examines the physical and psychological distance between those with power and those without power.
- The masculine/feminine values cultural dimension contrasts an assertive and tough perspective with a more modest and tender perspective.

- The high-/low-context cultural dimension focuses on whether meaning is expressed in words or through nonverbal communication and the nature of personal relationships.
- The monochronic/polychronic time cultural dimension contrasts cultures that value time and concentrate on one job at a time and cultures that are not controlled by time and are easily accept interruptions and distractions.

## 3.5 Intercultural Communication Strategies

What strategies can help you understand, respect, and effectively communicate with “others”?

- Effective communicators are mindful; that is, they are receptive to new information and are responsive to and respectful of other perspectives.
- Communication accommodation theory provides principles to help understand, respect, and successfully adapt to others without stereotyping.
- Finding ways to interact and actively engage people who are different than you are can help you become a better communicator.



Mikhail Kozlovsky/TAR-TASS Photo Agency/Alamy

# TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

## 3.1 How has the “changing face” of Canada affected your daily interactions?

- 1 You could use the following words to define culture.
- nationality
  - race
  - ethnicity
  - a, b, and c are correct.
  - None of these words define culture accurately.

## 3.2 How do ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and racism affect communication?

- 2 Jack sincerely believes that most people would be better off if their government and country were more like Canada. Which barrier to understanding others does Jack exemplify?
- ethnocentrism
  - stereotyping
  - prejudice
  - discrimination
  - racism
- 3 When the courts examined a supermarket’s hiring record, they found that the company never hired nonwhite applicants for the better-paying job of working cash registers. Which barrier to understanding others does this example exemplify?
- ethnocentrism
  - stereotyping
  - prejudice
  - discrimination
  - racism
- 4 Which of these barriers to understanding was evident when a 2-metre-high cross was set fire on the front lawn of a Nova Scotia family?
- ethnocentrism
  - stereotyping
  - prejudice
  - discrimination
  - racism

- 5 When someone seeks the advice of a gay friend when they want to decorate their home they are exhibiting this behaviour.

- ethnocentrism
- stereotyping
- prejudice
- discrimination
- racism

## 3.3 Why is so important to understand cultural diversity?

- 6 Which of the following contributes to your social identity?

- ethnicity
- socioeconomic position
- sexual orientation
- gender
- all of the above

## 3.4 What cultural dimensions affect the way you communicate with others?

- 7 Which of the following countries exhibits the most individualism?

- Australia
- Indonesia
- Taiwan
- Peru
- Pakistan

- 8 There is a strong correlation between collectivist cultures and cultures in which there is \_\_\_\_\_.

- individualism
- high power distance
- low power distance
- high-context communication
- monochronic time

- 9 Which behaviour is characteristic of a society with feminine values?

- Men are assertive, tough, and focused on success, whereas women are more modest and tender.
- Men’s and women’s gender roles overlap.
- Women assume most homemaking and child-rearing responsibilities.
- Men assume most homemaking and child-rearing responsibilities.
- Women are assertive, tough, and focused on success, whereas men are more modest and tender.

## 3.5 What strategies can help you understand, respect, and effectively communicate with “others”?

- 10 Which behaviour demonstrates mindfulness when communicating with people from other cultures?

- You pay attention to how you and another person are communicating.
- You recognize your personal prejudices and try to overcome them.
- You understand and respect different cultural values.
- You are receptive to new ideas and respect other people’s perspectives.
- You do all of the above.

Answers found on page 330.

## Key Terms

Co-cultures	High-context culture	Polychronic time
Collectivism	Individualism	Power distance
Communication	Intercultural dimension	Prejudices
accommodation	Low power distance	Race
theory	Low-context culture	Racism
Discrimination	Masculine societies	Religious literacy
Etuaptmumk	Mindfulness	Social identity
Ethnocentrism	Mindlessness	Stereotypes
Feminine societies	Monochronic time	
High power distance	Muted group theory	