



Chapter 6:  
Communicating Across  
Cultures

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# Culture and Communication

- *Culture*- The values, beliefs, orientations, and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in a society.
- *Intercultural Communication*- Interactions between people whose cultural assumptions are so different that the communication between them is altered
- *Culture Shock*- Psychological discomfort you may feel when you attempt to adjust to a new cultural situation.
  - Absence of shared meaning



# Culture and Communication

- Dominant cultures and co-cultures
  - *Dominant culture*- The attitudes, values, beliefs, and customs that the majority of people in a society hold in common.
  - *Co-cultures*- Groups of people living within a dominant culture but exhibiting communication that is sufficiently different to distinguish them from the dominant culture.

# Culture and Communication

- Major contributors to co-cultures:
  - *Race*
  - *Ethnicity*- Classification based on a combination of shared characteristics such as nationality, geographic origin, language, religion, ancestral customs, and tradition
  - *Sex and Gender*
  - *Religion*- System of beliefs that is shared by a group and that supplies a group with an entity (or entities) for devotion, rituals for worship, and code of ethics.
  - *Sexual Orientation*
  - *Social Class*- A level in the power hierarchy of a society. Based on income, education, occupation, and social habits.
  - *Age*



# Identifying Cultural Norms/Values

- Dimensions of culture that affect communication:
  - Individualism-Collectivism (ties back to Chap. 2, p. 30)
  - Uncertainty Avoidance
    - *Low-uncertainty avoidance culture*- More tolerant of uncertainty in how people behave, place little emphasis on reducing unpredictability
    - *High-uncertainty avoidance culture*- Low tolerance for unpredictability. Create systems of formal rules to provide security and avoid risk.

# Identifying Cultural Norms/Values

- Power Distance
  - *High power-distance*- Inequalities in power, status, and rank are viewed as natural and these differences are acknowledged by all members of the culture.
  - *Low power-distance*- Inequalities in power, rank, and status are muted. People know there are some with higher power, but they aren't in awe of or afraid of them.
- Masculinity-Femininity
  - Masculine culture- Expect people to maintain traditional gender roles and maintain different standards of behavior for men and women.
  - Feminine culture- Expect that people, regardless of sex, will assume a variety of roles depending on the circumstances and their own choice.



# Barriers to Effective Intercultural Communication

- Anxiety
- Assuming Similarity or Difference
- Ethnocentrism- The belief that one's own culture is superior to others.
- Stereotypes and Prejudice
  - *Stereotypes*- Attributions that cover up individual differences and ascribe certain characteristics to a group of people.
  - *Prejudice*- Defined as a rigid attribute based on group membership that predisposes us to think, feel, or act in a negative way toward another person or group.
- Incompatible Communication Codes
- Incompatible norms and values

# Intercultural Communication Competence

- Adopt Correct Attitudes
  - Tolerate ambiguity
  - Be open-minded
  - Be altruistic
    - *Altruism*- Display of genuine and unselfish concern for the welfare of others.
    - *Egocentricity*- Selfish interests in one's own needs to the exclusion of everything else.



# Intercultural Communication Competence

- Acquire Knowledge About Other Cultures
  - Observe
  - Formally study
  - Immerse yourself in the culture
- Develop Culture-Specific Skills
  - Practice listening
  - Practice *intercultural empathy*- Imaginatively placing yourself in the other person's cultural world to attempt to experience what they experience.
  - Develop *flexibility*- Ability to adjust your communication to fit another person and situation.

Thank you