

# Chapter 8



**Communication in Our Lives, 5th Edition**  
by Julia T. Wood

# Culture Defined

- Culture is a way of life
  - a *system* of ideas, values, beliefs, structures, and practices that is communicated by one generation to the next and that sustains a particular way of life

# Components of Culture

- Material
  - **tangible objects, physical substances altered by human invention**
- Nonmaterial
  - **intangible**
  - **reflect a culture's values**
  - **influence behavior**

# Nonmaterial Components

- Beliefs
  - a conception of what is true, factual, or valid
- Values
  - shared views of what is good, right, worthwhile, and important

# Nonmaterial Components

(cont'd)

- Norms
  - **informal rules guiding how members of a culture act, think, and feel**
- Language
  - **through the process of learning language, we learn our culture's beliefs, values, and norms**

# Cultures are Systems

- A coherent system of understandings, traditions, values, communication practices, and ways of living.

“You touch a culture in one place and everything else is affected.”

*--anthropologist Edward T. Hall*

# Cultures Vary on Five Dimensions

- Individualism
- High Uncertainty Avoidance
- High Power Distance
- Masculinity
- Long-Term Orientation
- Collectivism
- Low Uncertainty Avoidance
- Low Power Distance
- Femininity
- Short-Term Orientation

# Cultures are Dynamic

- Cultures evolve and change over time – four sources of change
  - **Invention**
  - **Diffusion**
  - **Calamity**
  - **Communication**

# Social Communities

- Cultures contain multiple social communities
  - **High-context communication style**
  - **Low-context communication style**



# Social Communities (cont'd)

- Gender as a social community
- Other social communities
  - social classes, race, and ethnicity



# Communication and Culture

- Communication expresses and sustains cultures
  - verbal and nonverbal patterns reflect and sustain cultural values and perspectives



# Communication and Culture

(cont'd)

- Cultures are shaped by historical and geographic forces
- We learn culture in the process of communicating



# Improving Intercultural Communication

- Resist the ethnocentric bias
  - **ethnocentrism**
    - using one's own culture and its practices as the standard for interpreting the values, beliefs, norms, and communication of others
  - **cultural relativism**
    - cultures vary in how they think, act, and behave, as well as in what they believe and value

# Improving Intercultural Communication (cont'd)

- Recognize that responding to diversity is a process

- Resistance
- Tolerance
- Understanding
- Respect
- Participation
  - multilingual



# Textbook WebLinks

- 7.1: Unspun  
: Key Concepts for Understanding the World Wide Web
  - This book addresses various aspects of the web, including authorship, community, and ideology
- 7.2: Turkish proverbs and folk sayings
- 7.3: Popular Palestinian proverbs

# Websites

- Definitions of *Culture*
- Intercultural Communication Institute
- Comparing Cultural Norms and Values
- Proverbs from Around the World

# More Websites

- Y? The National Forum on People's Differences
  - An open discussion board of issues related to gender and ethnicity
- Center for Equal Opportunity
  - Information on affirmative action, immigration and assimilation, and bilingual education