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hairs, or tw
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- 2 There is no
– the worl
world arms
president)
- 3 All people a
(Confucius
- 4 Prejudices,
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there, firm a
- 5 I consider m
Confucian.
leader)
- 6 No object is
U.S. author

Questions Raised in Chapter One

Working with a partner or in a small group, discuss two or three of the following questions.

- 1 Are there more similarities or more differences among people around the world in the way they think, behave, and communicate?
- 2 What are the most important social and cultural values influencing your own beliefs and behavior?
- 3 What are the major obstacles to intercultural communication? How can they be reduced?
- 4 If you live in another culture for an extended period of time, should you embrace the proverb "When in Rome, do as the Romans do"?
- 5 Do you think that when you live in a new culture your values, opinions, or behavior change in any way?

Brief Quotations

The following quotations deal with intercultural issues considered in this chapter. Working with a partner or in a small group, choose two or three quotations and discuss them.

- 1 *There never were, in the world, two opinions alike, no more than two hairs, or two grains; the most universal quality is diversity.* (Montaigne, French essayist)
- 2 *There is no longer division between what is foreign and what is domestic – the world economy, the world environment, the world AIDS crisis, the world arms race – they affect us all.* (William Jefferson Clinton, U.S. president)
- 3 *All people are the same. It is only their habits that are different.* (Confucius, Chinese philosopher)
- 4 *Prejudices, it is well known, are most difficult to eradicate from the heart whose soil has never been loosened or fertilized by education; they grow there, firm as weeds among stones.* (Charlotte Brontë, English writer)
- 5 *I consider myself a Hindu, Christian, Moslem, Jew, Buddhist, and Confucian.* (Mohandas Gandhi, Indian nationalist and spiritual leader)
- 6 *No object is mysterious. The mystery is in your eye.* (Elizabeth Bowen, U.S. author)

CORE READING 1

American Values and Assumptions

Journal Writing

In your journal, write for ten to fifteen minutes about one or two cultural differences you've noticed while living in a foreign country or in a place that is culturally different from where you grew up. Then share your thoughts with several classmates.

Previewing the Topic

Read the first paragraph of "American Values and Assumptions," in which the author discusses the concept of values. Then write a list of three or four major values in your culture. Discuss your list in a small group and then write a list of all the cultural values on the board.

Agreeing and Disagreeing

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Fill in each blank with SA (strongly agree), A (agree), U (undecided), D (disagree), or SD (strongly disagree). Then share your responses with several classmates.

- _____ 1 It's usually better to do things by yourself than to accept help from other people.
- _____ 2 Not everyone's opinions are equally valid and worthy of consideration.
- _____ 3 People do not have control over their own destinies.
- _____ 4 Nature should be controlled and used in the service of human beings.
- _____ 5 When young people are eighteen years old, they should be encouraged to move away from home.
- _____ 6 Competition is a strong value in my culture.
- _____ 7 If someone does something that bothers you, you should express your feelings openly and directly to the person.
- _____ 8 When living in a foreign country, you should try to assimilate by embracing the nation's customs and practices.
- _____ 9 People in my culture are quite informal in their personal and professional relationships.
- _____ 10 It's better to focus on the future than to think too much about your culture's past – its customs, traditions, and heritage.

Taking Notes While Reading

As you read the selected text, take notes on the values. Then, in the space provided, write the value is in your culture.



American Values

Gary Althen

Gary Althen was a foreign-born American who has written several books based on his experiences working with students, immigrants, and refugees. This work is from a chapter in *American Values* (2003).

People who grow up in a culture that does not mean the same extent. It does mean different ideas about what is right and wrong, also agree, mostly, with the relationships, and so on.

Notice that the values are different from each other. In general, people are viewed as a collection of individuals, not as a group of people.

INDIVIDUALISM

The most important value in American culture is devotion to individualism. Americans see themselves as separate from the group and their own decisions. They do not have a close-knit interdependence or collectivity.

You can see it in the way Americans shop at a shopping mall, waiting in line for a drink made in a blender. When I was in the line was a woman and a girl who was about the same age and I could hear that they were talking.

The boy asked his mother, "No," she said to him.

Remember you bought a dog. So you could get a dog. and sometime later when you could get an Orange dog.

Taking Notes While You Read

As you read the selection, underline or highlight the passages that identify major U.S. values. Then, in the margin next to a marked passage, indicate how prominent the value is in your culture by writing "very strong," "strong," "not very strong," or "weak."



American Values and Assumptions

Gary Althen

Gary Althen was a foreign student adviser at the University of Iowa for many years. He has written several books based on his experiences living in Peru and Malaysia and on his extensive work with students, immigrants, and other visitors to the United States. This reading is taken from a chapter in American Ways: A Guide for Foreigners in the United States, second edition (2003).

People who grow up in a particular culture share certain values and assumptions. 1
That does not mean they all share exactly the same values to exactly the same extent. It does mean that most of them, most of the time, agree with each other's ideas about what is right and wrong, desirable and undesirable, and so on. They also agree, mostly, with each other's assumptions about human nature, social relationships, and so on. . . .

Notice that the values and assumptions discussed below overlap with and support 2
each other. In general, they agree with each other. They fit together. A culture can be viewed as a collection of values and assumptions that go together to shape the way a group of people perceives and relates to the world around them.

INDIVIDUALISM

The most important thing to understand about Americans is probably their 3
devotion to individualism. They are trained from very early in their lives to consider themselves as separate individuals who are responsible for their own situations in life and their own destinies. They're not trained to see themselves as members of a close-knit interdependent family, religious group, tribe, nation, or any other collectivity.

You can see it in the way Americans treat their children. One day I was at a local 4
shopping mall, waiting in line to buy an Orange Julius. (An Orange Julius is a cool drink made in a blender with orange juice, ice, and some other ingredients.) Behind me in the line was a woman with two children, a boy who was about three years old and a girl who was about five. The boy had his hand in the pocket of his blue jeans, and I could hear that he had some coins in there.

The boy asked his mother, "Can I get an Orange Julius?" 5

"No," she said to him. "You don't have enough money left for an Orange Julius. 6
Remember you bought that cookie a while ago. You do have enough money for a hot dog. So you could get a hot dog now if you want to. Or, you could save your money, and sometime later when you have enough money, we could come back here and you could get an Orange Julius."

When I tell this story to people from other countries, they usually react with disbelief. The idea that a child so young would even have his own money to spend, let alone be expected to decide how to spend it, seems beyond their comprehension. Here is a young child whose own mother is forcing him to make a decision that affects not just his situation at the moment – whether or not to get a hot dog – but that will affect him at some unspecified time in the future, when he will have more money.

But when Americans hear the story, they usually understand it perfectly well. This mother is helping her son learn to make his own decisions and to be accountable for his own money. Some American parents might not expect a three-year-old to make a decision about how to spend money, but they certainly understand what the mother is doing. She is getting her son ready for a world in which he will be responsible for his choices and their consequences. Even his own mother won't be helping him later in life, and he needs to be ready for that.

This particular mother may or may not have owned a copy of Dr. Benjamin Spock's famous book, *Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care*, to which millions of American parents have long turned for information and advice on raising their children. The most recent version of the book makes this observation:

In the United States . . . very few children are raised to believe that their personal destiny is to serve their family, their country, their God [as is the practice in some other countries]. Generally children [in the United States] are given the feeling that they can set their own aims and occupation in life, according to their inclinations. We're raising them to be rugged individualists. . . . (1998; p. 7)

While it has become more acceptable in light of changing economic circumstances (especially higher housing costs) for young adults to live in their parents' house, the ideal of independence after high school graduation remains. If it is economically feasible for them to do so, young adult Americans are expected to live apart from their parents, either on their own or in college, or risk being viewed as immature, "tied to their mother's apron strings," or otherwise unable to lead a normal, independent life. . . .

Americans are trained to conceive of themselves as separate individuals, and they assume everyone else in the world is too. When they encounter a person from abroad who seems to them excessively concerned with the opinions of parents, with following traditions, or with fulfilling obligations to others, they assume that the person feels trapped or is weak, indecisive, or "overly dependent." They assume all people must resent being in situations where they are not "free to make up their own minds." They assume, furthermore, that after living for a time in the United States, people will come to feel "liberated" from constraints arising outside themselves and will be grateful for the opportunity to "do their own thing" and "have it their own way." As indeed, many are. . . .

The individual that Americans idealize prefers an atmosphere of freedom, where neither the government nor any other external force or agency dictates what the individual does. For Americans, the idea of individual freedom has strong, positive connotations.

By contrast, people from non-American cultures often legitimize by the lack of consideration for others. Foreign visitors who understand with the notion that the free, self-will be able to understand many otherwise might not make sense.

- Americans see as heroes those who do something first, like aviators Charles Lindbergh and basketball player Michael Jordan. The world of fiction is the American picture actors as John Wayne.
- Americans admire people who overcome, for example, poverty or a physical handicap. Educator Booker T. Washington and lecturer Helen Keller are examples.
- Many Americans do not understand people in more traditional cultures from their point of view, being dependent or biological accident. They see children while the children are reaching "the age of independence" occasionally even broken.
- It is not unusual for Americans to expect two (and sometimes you) to pay their parents for their grown children may do showing independence, s
- Certain phrases one devotion to individualism don't look out for yourself "Be your own best friend"

COMPETITION

Individualistic Americans naturally compare themselves to others. Competitiveness pervades American life, from athletic events and star athletes.

- ¹ Charles Lindbergh (1902–1974): American aviator.
- ² Amelia Earhart (1897–1937): First woman to fly solo across the Atlantic (in 1932).
- ³ Booker T. Washington (1856–1915): Southern educator, founder of Tuskegee University for African-American students.
- ⁴ Helen Keller (1880–1968): Graduate of Radcliffe College, advocate of social causes.

By contrast, people from many other cultures regard some of the behavior 13
Americans legitimize by the label "individual freedom" to be self-centered and
lacking in consideration for others. . . .

Foreign visitors who understand the degree to which Americans are imbued 14
with the notion that the free, self-reliant individual is the ideal kind of human being
will be able to understand many aspects of American behavior and thinking that
otherwise might not make sense. A very few of the many possible examples:

- Americans see as heroes those individuals who "stand out from the crowd" by doing something first, longest, most often, or otherwise "best." Examples are aviators Charles Lindbergh¹ and Amelia Earhart,² golfer Tiger Woods, and basketball player Michael Jordan. Perhaps the best example from the world of fiction is the American cowboy as portrayed by such motion-picture actors as John Wayne and Clint Eastwood.
- Americans admire people who have overcome adverse circumstances (for example, poverty or a physical handicap) and "succeeded" in life. Black educator Booker T. Washington³ is one example; the blind and deaf author and lecturer Helen Keller⁴ is another.
- Many Americans do not display the degree of respect for their parents that people in more traditional or family-oriented societies commonly do. From their point of view, being born to particular parents was a sort of historical or biological accident. The parents fulfilled their responsibilities to the children while the children were young, and now that the children have reached "the age of independence," the close child-parent tie is loosened, occasionally even broken.
- It is not unusual for Americans who are beyond the age of about twenty-two (and sometimes younger) and who are still living with their parents to pay their parents for room and board. Elderly parents living with their grown children may do likewise. Paying for room and board is a way of showing independence, self-reliance, and responsibility for oneself.
- Certain phrases one commonly hears among Americans capture their devotion to individualism: "You'll have to decide that for yourself." "If you don't look out for yourself, no one else will." "Look out for number one." "Be your own best friend."

COMPETITION

Individualistic Americans naturally see themselves as being in competition with 15
others. Competitiveness pervades the society. It is obvious in the attention given
to athletic events and star athletes, who are praised for being "real competitors."

¹ Charles Lindbergh (1902–1974): American pilot who, in 1927, made the first solo, nonstop transatlantic flight.

² Amelia Earhart (1897–1937): First woman to fly across the Atlantic Ocean (in 1928) and to fly across it alone (in 1932).

³ Booker T. Washington (1856–1915): Son of a slave who went from working in coal mines to founding a university for African-American students and becoming one of the leading educators of his day.

⁴ Helen Keller (1880–1968): Graduate of Radcliffe College who went on to write and lecture extensively about social causes.

It is also obvious in schools and extracurricular activities for children, where games and contests are assumed to be desirable and beneficial. Competitiveness is less obvious when it is in the minds of people who are consistently comparing themselves with others: who is faster, smarter, richer, better looking; whose children are the most successful; whose husband is the best provider or the best cook or the best lover; which salesperson sold the most during the past quarter; who earned his first million dollars at the earliest age; and so on. People who are competing with others are essentially alone, trying to maintain their superiority and, implicitly, their separateness from others.

PRIVACY

Also closely associated with the value they place on individualism is the importance Americans assign to privacy. Americans assume that people "need some time to themselves" or "some time alone" to think about things or recover their spent psychological energy. Americans have great difficulty understanding people who always want to be with another person, who dislike being alone. Americans tend to regard such people as weak or dependent. . . .

Americans' attitudes about privacy can be difficult for foreigners to understand. Americans' houses, yards, and even their offices can seem open and inviting, yet, in the Americans' minds, there are boundaries that other people are simply not supposed to cross. When the boundaries are crossed, the Americans' bodies will visibly stiffen and their manner will become cool and aloof.

EQUALITY

Americans are also distinctive in the degree to which they believe in the ideal, as stated in their Declaration of Independence,⁵ that "all men are created equal." Although they sometimes violate the ideal in their daily lives, particularly in matters of interracial relationships and sometimes relationships among people from different social classes, Americans have a deep faith that in some fundamental way all people (at least all American people) are of equal value, that no one is born superior to anyone else. "One person, one vote," they say, conveying the idea that any person's opinion is as valid and worthy of attention as any other person's opinion.

Americans are generally quite uncomfortable when someone treats them with obvious deference. They dislike being the subjects of open displays of respect – being bowed to, being deferred to, being treated as though they could do no wrong or make no unreasonable requests. . . .

Foreigners who are accustomed to more obvious displays of respect (such as bowing, averting eyes from the face of the higher status person, or using honorific titles⁶) often overlook the ways in which Americans show respect for people of higher status. They think, incorrectly, that Americans are generally unaware of status differences and disrespectful of other people. What is distinctive about the American outlook on the matter of equality are the underlying assumptions that (1) no matter what a person's initial station in life, he or she has the opportunity to

⁵ *Declaration of Independence*: Document announcing the creation of the United States and its separation from Great Britain (1776).

⁶ *honorific titles*: Titles of honor or respect.

achieve high standing and a basic level of respectful treatment.

INFORMALITY

Their notions of equality affect their behavior and in their relationships. For example, they may introduce customers in a casual, friendly way. They have been trained to believe that it is not unusual to happen to be engaged at a lowly level. This informal behavior is common in countries where it is not.

People from societies where status is important are struck by the informality of American behavior. Idiomatic speech and slang are considered reserved for public events. In formal situations in life can be seen in public places. They slouch down in chairs or stand, maintaining an erect bearing.

A brochure advertising a jogging event shows a photograph showing the president jogging past one of the crowd. The president is seen to find the photograph appropriate. He doesn't think he should be photographed.

Likewise, U.S. President Ronald Reagan is photographed in his jogging suit.

The superficial friendliness of Americans, their informal, egalitarian behavior toward anyone, or "Howya doin'?" behavior reflects not so much a lack of awareness (not conscious) for showing respect to pleasant people – like the Americans – as the superpower country. . . .

THE FUTURE, CHANGE, AND PROGRESS

Americans are generally optimistic about the future. From older societies. "History is what counts." They look for change that is within their control, and they think, sets the future. Americans believe that they can change most aspects of their lives, so, then make appropriate improvements. New things are being created.

Closely associated with this optimism are changes in the future in the environments are subject to change.

achieve high standing and (2) everyone, no matter how unfortunate, deserves some basic level of respectful treatment.

INFORMALITY

Their notions of equality lead Americans to be quite informal in their general behavior and in their relationships with other people. Store clerks and table servers, for example, may introduce themselves by their first (given) names and treat customers in a casual, friendly manner. American clerks, like other Americans, have been trained to believe that they are as valuable as any other people, even if they happen to be engaged at a given time in an occupation that others might consider lowly. This informal behavior can outrage foreign visitors who hold high stations in countries where it is not assumed that "all men are created equal." . . .

People from societies where general behavior is more formal than it is in America are struck by the informality of American speech, dress, and body language. Idiomatic speech and slang are liberally used on most occasions, with formal speech reserved for public events and fairly formal situations. People of almost any station in life can be seen in public wearing jeans, sandals, or other informal attire. People slouch down in chairs or lean on walls or furniture when they talk, rather than maintaining an erect bearing.

A brochure advertising a highly-regarded liberal-arts college contains a photograph showing the college's president, dressed in shorts and an old T-shirt, jogging past one of the classroom buildings on his campus. Americans are likely to find the photograph appealing: "Here is a college president who's just like anyone else. He doesn't think he's too good for us."

Likewise, U.S. President George W. Bush frequently allowed himself to be photographed in his jogging attire while out for one of his frequent runs.

The superficial friendliness for which Americans are so well known is related to their informal, egalitarian approach to other people. "Hi!" they will say to just about anyone, or "Howya doin'?" (that is, "How are you doing?" or "How are you?"). This behavior reflects not so much a special interest in the person addressed as a concern (not conscious) for showing that one is a "regular guy," part of a group of normal, pleasant people – like the jogging college president and the jogging president of his superpower country. . . .

THE FUTURE, CHANGE, AND PROGRESS

Americans are generally less concerned about history and traditions than are people from older societies. "History doesn't matter," many of them will say. "It's the future that counts." They look ahead. They have the idea that what happens in the future is within their control, or at least subject to their influence. The mature, sensible person, they think, sets goals for the future and works systematically toward them. Americans believe that people, as individuals or working cooperatively together, can change most aspects of the physical and social environment if they decide to do so, then make appropriate plans and get to work. Changes will presumably produce improvements. New things are better than old things.

Closely associated with their assumption that they can bring about desirable changes in the future is the Americans' assumption that their physical and social environments are subject to human domination or control. Early Americans cleared

forests, drained swamps, and altered the course of rivers in order to "build" the country. Contemporary Americans have gone to the moon in part just to prove they could do so! "If you want to be an American," says cross-cultural trainer L. Robert Kohls, "you have to believe you can fix it." . . .

This fundamental American belief in progress and a better future contrasts sharply with the *fatalistic* (Americans are likely to use that term with a negative or critical connotation) attitude that characterizes people from many other cultures, notably Latin American, Asian, and Arab, where there is a pronounced reverence for the past. In those cultures the future is often considered to be in the hands of fate, God, or at least the few powerful people or families that dominate the society. The idea that they could somehow shape their own futures seems naive, arrogant, or even sacrilegious.

Americans are generally impatient with people they see as passively accepting conditions that are less than desirable. "Why don't they do something about it?" Americans will ask. Americans don't realize that a large portion of the world's population sees the world around them not as something they can change, but rather as something to which they must submit, or at least something with which they must seek to live in harmony. . . .

TIME

For Americans, time is a resource that, like water or coal, can be used well or poorly. "Time is money," they say. "You only get so much time in this life; you'd best use it wisely." As Americans are trained to see things, the future will not be better than the past or the present unless people use their time for constructive, future-oriented activities. Thus, Americans admire a "well-organized" person, one who has a written list of things to do and a schedule for doing them. The ideal person is punctual (that is, arrives at the scheduled time for a meeting or event) and is considerate of other people's time (that is, does not "waste people's time" with conversation or other activity that has no visible, beneficial outcome). . . .

The American attitude toward time is not necessarily shared by others, especially non-Europeans. They are more likely to conceive of time as something that is simply there, around them, not something they can "use." One of the more difficult things many foreign businessmen and students must adjust to in the United States is the notion that time must be saved whenever possible and used wisely every day.

In their efforts to use their time wisely, Americans are sometimes seen by foreign visitors as automatons, unhuman creatures who are so tied to their clocks, their schedules, and their daily planners that they cannot participate in or enjoy the human interactions that are the truly important things in life. "They are like little machines running around," one foreign visitor said.

The premium Americans place on *efficiency* is closely related to their concepts of the future, change, and time. To do something efficiently is to do it in the way that is quickest and requires the smallest expenditure of resources. This may be why e-mail has become such a popular means of communication in American society. Students commonly correspond with their professors by e-mail rather than waiting to talk with them during their office hours. Likewise, businesspeople frequently check their e-mail before and after work, on the weekend, and even while on vacation.

American businesses sometimes and to suggest ways in which they are investing. Popular music, shop, cook, clean house, do errands. The Internet provides immediate feedback. Americans have come to expect other forms of communication that aren't immediately forthcoming.

ACHIEVEMENT, ACTION, WORK,
"He's a hard worker," one American says. "He's done the job done." These expressions describe a person who approaches a task and reaches a successful conclusion. Most Americans are *achievers*, people whose satisfaction comes from a physical, measurable task. . . .

Visitors from abroad comment on the "American way of life." (Perhaps these visitors see movies and television programs that show them driving around in cars.) While the so-called "Protestant ethic" is still a part of American life, there is still a strong emphasis on hard work. A hard worker is one who completes the task in a way that is efficient.

More generally, Americans value hard work. They tend to devote significant energy to their work. That is, they tend to believe that hard work is usually not content, as people are usually not content with other people. They get restless with something, or at least making something.

People without the American ethic are often frenzied, always "on the go." They are impatient. They may, beyond their work, tend to relax and enjoy life's pleasures. The pleasure of acquiring lavish equipment is something. . . .

Americans tend to define success. "What's she?" "She's the vice president." Backgrounds, educational backgrounds, are important in identifying people.

Americans tend to spend money. They were once considered luxurious. They have machines, microwave ovens, and so on. "Necessities" by many Americans. Teenagers, encourage spending.

⁷ Protestant work ethic: Belief that work is a duty.

American businesses sometimes hire "efficiency experts" to review their operations and to suggest ways in which they could accomplish more with the resources they are investing. Popular magazines offer suggestions for more efficient ways to shop, cook, clean house, do errands, raise children, tend the yard, and on and on. The Internet provides immediate access to all kinds of information and products. Americans have come to expect instant responses to phone calls, e-mails, faxes, and other forms of communication. Many quickly become impatient if the responses aren't immediately forthcoming, even when there is no apparent urgency. . . .

ACHIEVEMENT, ACTION, WORK, AND MATERIALISM

"He's a hard worker," one American might say in praise of another. Or, "She gets the job done." These expressions convey the typical American's admiration for a person who approaches a task conscientiously and persistently, seeing it through to a successful conclusion. More than that, these expressions convey an admiration for *achievers*, people whose lives are centered around efforts to accomplish some physical, measurable task. . . .

Visitors from abroad commonly remark, "Americans work harder than I expected them to." (Perhaps these visitors have been excessively influenced by American movies and television programs, which are less likely to show people working than to show them driving around in fast cars or pursuing members of the opposite sex.) While the so-called "Protestant work ethic"⁷ may have lost some of its hold on Americans, there is still a strong belief that the ideal person is a "hard worker." A hard worker is one who "gets right to work" on a task, works efficiently, and completes the task in a way that meets reasonably high standards of quality. . . .

More generally, Americans like *action*. They do indeed believe it is important to devote significant energy to their jobs or to other daily responsibilities. Beyond that, they tend to believe they should be *doing* something most of the time. They are usually not content, as people from many countries are, to sit for hours and talk with other people. They get restless and impatient. They believe they should be doing something, or at least making plans and arrangements for doing something later.

People without the Americans' action orientation often see Americans as frenzied, always "on the go," never satisfied, compulsively active, and often impatient. They may, beyond that, evaluate Americans negatively for being unable to relax and enjoy life's pleasures. Even recreation, for Americans, is often a matter of acquiring lavish equipment, making elaborate plans, then going somewhere to *do* something. . . .

Americans tend to define and evaluate people by the jobs they have. ("Who is she?" "She's the vice president in charge of personal loans at the bank.") Family backgrounds, educational attainments, and other characteristics are considered less important in identifying people than the jobs they have. . . .

Americans tend to spend money rather freely on material goods. Items that were once considered luxuries, such as personal computers, telephone answering machines, microwave ovens, and electric garage-door openers are now considered "necessities" by many Americans. Credit cards, which are widely available even to teenagers, encourage spending, and of course the scale and scope of the advertising

⁷ Protestant work ethic: Belief that with hard work and self-discipline, a person will eventually succeed.

industry is well known. Americans are often criticized for being so “materialistic,” so concerned with acquiring possessions. For Americans, though, this materialism is natural and proper. They have been taught that it is a good thing to achieve, to work hard, acquire more material badges of their success, and in the process assure a better future for themselves and their immediate families. And, like people elsewhere, they do what they are taught.

DIRECTNESS AND ASSERTIVENESS

Americans, as we’ve said before, generally consider themselves to be frank, open, and direct in their dealings with other people. “Let’s lay our cards on the table,”⁸ they say. Or, “Let’s stop playing games and get to the point.” These and many other common expressions convey the Americans’ idea that people should explicitly state what they think and what they want from other people.

Americans usually assume that conflicts or disagreements are best settled by means of forthright discussions among the people involved. If I dislike something you are doing, I should tell you about it directly so you will know, clearly and from me personally, how I feel about it. Bringing in other people to mediate a dispute is considered somewhat cowardly, the act of a person without enough courage to speak directly to someone else. Mediation is, however, slowly gaining in popularity in recent years.

The word *assertive* is the adjective Americans commonly use to describe the person who plainly and directly expresses feelings and requests. People who are inadequately assertive can take “assertiveness-training classes.” What Americans consider assertive is, however, often judged as aggressive by some non-Americans and sometimes by Americans – if the person referred to is a woman. . . .

Americans are not taught, as people in many Asian countries are, that they should mask their emotional responses. Their words, the tone of their voices, or their facial expressions will usually reveal when they are feeling angry, unhappy, confused, or happy and content. They do not think it improper to display these feelings, at least within limits. Many Asians feel embarrassed around Americans who are exhibiting a strong emotional response to something. On the other hand, Latin Americans and Arabs are generally inclined to display their emotions more openly than Americans do, and to view Americans as unemotional and “cold.”

Americans, however, are often less direct and open than they realize. There are, in fact, many restrictions on their willingness to discuss things openly. It is difficult to categorize those restrictions, and the restrictions are often not “logical” in the sense of being consistent with each other. Generally, though, Americans are reluctant to speak openly when:

- the topic is in an area they consider excessively personal, such as unpleasant body or mouth odors, sexual functioning, or personal inadequacies;
- they want to say “no” to a request that has been made of them but do not want to offend or “hurt the feelings of” the person who made the request;
- they are not well enough acquainted with the other person to be confident

⁸ to lay one’s cards on the table: To state one’s opinion honestly.

that direct discussion is intended; and, paradoxically,

- they know the other person’s feelings and they do not wish to hurt them by talking about some-
thing that is important to them.

All of this is to say that Americans are more assertive and even though they value their openness. It is not unusual for them to tell other people when they are not in agreement a constructive way that would be helpful.

Despite these limitations, Americans tell people from almost all other cultures that they will not try to mask their feelings. They are much less concerned with their own feelings (themselves or others) than people from other cultures. It is more important than preserving face.

Americans use the word *assertive* to describe people who are excessively assertive in expressing their feelings. It is an acceptable assertiveness. Americans and people from other cultures have different common forms of interaction. Americans in the way they interact with other people.

Reading Journal

In your journal, write about your reading of this chapter.

- 1 Explain what a visitor to a new culture might experience in an intercultural misunderstanding.
- 2 Describe an experience you have had in which you did not understand it better.
- 3 Choose a topic of your own and write about it.

Main Ideas

One of the most important things to recognize the main idea of a paragraph. When you read something, you should be able to recognize the main idea. When you read something, you should be able to recognize the main idea.

- What main idea is the author trying to convey?
- How does the main idea relate to the title?
- How does the writer want me to remember this?

that direct discussion will be accepted in the constructive way that is intended; and, paradoxically,

- they know the other person very well (it might be a spouse or close friend) and they do not wish to risk giving offense and creating negative feelings by talking about some delicate problem. . . .

All of this is to say that Americans, even though they see themselves as properly assertive and even though they often behave in open and direct ways, have limits on their openness. It is not unusual for them to try to avoid direct confrontations with other people when they are not confident that the interaction can be carried out in a constructive way that will result in an acceptable compromise. . . .

Despite these limitations, Americans are generally more direct and open than people from almost all other countries with the exception of Israel and Australia. They will not try to mask their emotions, as Scandinavians or Japanese tend to do. They are much less concerned with "face" (that is, avoiding embarrassment to themselves or others) than most Asians are. To them, being honest is usually more important than preserving harmony in interpersonal relationships.

Americans use the words *pushy* or *aggressive* to describe a person who is excessively assertive in expressing opinions or making requests. The line between acceptable assertiveness and unacceptable aggressiveness is difficult to draw. Iranians and people from other countries where forceful arguing and negotiating are common forms of interaction risk being seen as aggressive or pushy when they treat Americans in the way they treat people at home.

Reading Journal

In your journal, write about one of the following topics.

- 1 Explain what a visitor to your country should know in order to avoid intercultural misunderstandings.
- 2 Describe an experience you had in a foreign country or culture that helped you understand it better.
- 3 Choose a topic of your own related to the reading.

Main Ideas

One of the most important skills you can develop as a good reader is the ability to recognize the **main idea** in a piece of writing. Although writers often include many ideas, there is usually a central point, or message, they wish to convey.

When you read something, you should ask yourself the following questions:

- What main idea is the writer trying to communicate?
- How does the main idea relate to other ideas in the reading?
- How does the writer develop his or her main point? What does the writer want me to remember about this subject?

Answer the following questions, referring to the notes you took when reading the selection. Then share your answers with a partner.

- 1 According to the reading, what is the most important thing to understand about U.S. culture? Explain.
- 2 In the reading, Althen provides many examples of cross-cultural differences in values and assumptions. Which consequences of these differences does he focus on? Give two examples.
- 3 What is the main point Althen makes in the reading? Summarize his central idea in one or two sentences. Use your own words. Begin with the sentence *In the chapter "American Values and Assumptions," Gary Althen maintains that . . .*

Reflecting on Content

Answer the following questions with a partner. When possible, support your answers with observations based on your own experiences.

- 1 In paragraph 2, Althen says that the values and assumptions discussed in the reading "overlap with and support each other. In general, they agree with each other. They fit together." Give two examples of cultural values mentioned in the reading that you think overlap with and support each other.
- 2 Are the U.S. values that Althen discusses similar to or different from those in the culture with which you are most familiar? Explain. Focus on one or two of the values mentioned in the reading.
- 3 Can you tell how Althen feels about the issues he discusses? How objective do you consider his writing to be? Be as specific as possible.

A Writer's Technique: Supporting Details

Good writers provide sufficient details such as examples, facts, quotations, and definitions to support their ideas. Writers use this information, known as **supporting detail**, to explain, clarify, or illustrate their main points. Without such specific material, a writer's ideas remain abstract and unconvincing. Experienced writers try, whenever possible, to show rather than simply tell their readers what their ideas mean.

Look at these statements from "American Values and Assumptions." Locate them in the reading and then write a sentence that describes the main idea the statement supports or illustrates. Then share your answers with a partner.

Example: *A brochure . . . contains a photograph showing the college's president, dressed in shorts and an old T-shirt, jogging past one of the classroom buildings on his campus. (par. 23)*

Main Idea: *People from the United States value informality and equality in their everyday lives.*

- 1 If it is economically expected to live apart, risk being viewed as
- 2 Americans' houses, yet, in the American not supposed to cr
- 3 Early Americans cle rivers in order to "b
- 4 Thus, Americans ad of things to do and a
- 5 Even recreation, for making elaborate pla

Vocabulary: Negative

Studying the parts of w English a word is forme of the **word root** – the beginning of a word ro root are called **suffixes** suffixes change its part

Look at the following e

Root
operate (verb)
conscious (adjective)

In English, many prefix "not," "the opposite of,

- 1 Following are twelve removed. Fill in the In some cases, there words in the reading

- un-
- a. ___desirable (par
 - b. ___belief (par. 7)
 - c. ___specified (par
 - d. ___mature (par.
 - e. ___decisive (par.
 - f. ___respectful (pa

- 1 If it is economically feasible for them to do so, young adult Americans are expected to live apart from their parents, either on their own or in college, or risk being viewed as immature. (par. 10)
- 2 Americans' houses, yards, and even their offices can seem open and inviting, yet, in the Americans' minds, there are boundaries that other people are simply not supposed to cross. (par. 17)
- 3 Early Americans cleared forests, drained swamps, and altered the course of rivers in order to "build" the country. (par. 27)
- 4 Thus, Americans admire a "well-organized" person, one who has a written list of things to do and a schedule for doing them. (par. 30)
- 5 Even recreation, for Americans, is often a matter of acquiring lavish equipment, making elaborate plans, then going somewhere to *do* something. (par. 37)

Vocabulary: Negative Prefixes

Studying the parts of words is a good way to develop your vocabulary. Often in English a word is formed by adding a group of letters to the beginning or the end of the **word root** – the basic part of the word. Groups of letters attached to the beginning of a word root are called **prefixes**. Those attached to the end of a word root are called **suffixes**. In general, prefixes change the meaning of a word and suffixes change its part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, and adverb).

Look at the following examples of roots, prefixes, and suffixes.

Root	Prefix	Suffix
operate (<i>verb</i>)	cooperate (<i>verb</i>)	coopera tion (<i>noun</i>)
conscious (<i>adjective</i>)	un conscious (<i>adjective</i>)	unconsciously (<i>adverb</i>)

In English, many prefixes indicate something negative – that is, the prefixes mean "not," "the opposite of," or "lacking in."

- 1 Following are twelve words from the reading, each with its negative prefix removed. Fill in the blank with the proper negative prefix from the list below. In some cases, there might be more than one possible response. Then find the words in the reading and check your answers.

un-, in-, im-, il-, ir-, a-, ab-, non-, dis-, mis-

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. ___desirable (par. 1) | g. ___formal (par. 25) |
| b. ___belief (par. 7) | h. ___patient (par. 29) |
| c. ___specified (par. 7) | i. ___Europeans (par. 31) |
| d. ___mature (par. 10) | j. ___human (par. 32) |
| e. ___decisive (par. 11) | k. ___adequately (par. 42) |
| f. ___respectful (par. 20) | l. ___emotional (par. 43) |

- ## Vocabulary in Context

- 1 a time in a new culture when you felt liberated from certain *constraints* (par. 11)
- 2 an idea that has strong, positive *connotations* in your culture (par. 12)
- 3 someone you think *stands out from the crowd*, and why (par. 14)
- 4 whether *self-reliance* is valued in your culture (par. 14)
- 5 a reason someone might behave in an *aloof* manner (par. 17)
- 6 something you *place a premium on*, and why (par. 33)
- 7 a time when you *saw something through* to a successful conclusion (par. 34)
- 8 a situation in which someone might say, "Let's *lay our cards on the table*" (par. 40)
- 9 the degree to which speaking in a direct and *forthright* manner is valued in your culture (par. 41)
- 10 whether people in your culture are *inclined* to display their emotions in public (par. 43)

Discussion

- 1 Review the major categories of U.S. values and assumptions in Althen's chapter. Choose two or three of the categories and discuss whether similar cultural patterns are seen in the culture with which you are most familiar. Think of examples that reflect the existence or the lack of such ways of thinking, behaving, and viewing the world.
- 2 One way to get a sense of the values and assumptions of a culture is to look at its proverbs and sayings. Following are ten common proverbs in English. Choose five of the proverbs and discuss (1) the meaning of each proverb, (2) a

in i

- 3** In a library or on the Web, find out how a person who has lived in a new culture for a long time might feel. Focus on the differences between the new culture and the one in which the individual grew up. Write a paragraph about the differences. Compare your paragraph with those of your classmates.

Writing Follow-up

- 1 Imagine you are a member of a group that has just arrived in a new country. Write a short speech or letter to your group members, explaining the challenges you face and discussing the major differences between your old and new culture in order to adapt more easily.
- 2 Write one or two paragraphs about a cultural trait that you have selected and their cross-cultural differences. Discuss the importance of understanding about cultural variations.
- 3 Briefly, compare the importance of the cultural differences in your experience you've had.

situation in which it might be used, (3) the values it reflects, and (4) whether an equivalent exists in another language that you know. See the example below.

Proverb: *The early bird catches the worm.*

Meaning: *The person who starts early on something has the best chance of success.*

Situation: *Claire began looking for a summer job in December. She knew that the early bird catches the worm.*

Values: *Diligence, action, punctuality*

Other language: *The German equivalent translates as "The morning hour has gold in its mouth."*

- a. Don't cry over spilled milk.
 - b. God helps those who help themselves.
 - c. Too many cooks spoil the broth.
 - d. You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink.
 - e. The squeaky wheel gets the grease.
 - f. A penny saved is a penny earned.
 - g. Don't count your chickens before they're hatched.
 - h. Strike while the iron is hot.
 - i. A man's home is his castle.
 - j. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
- 3 In a library or on the World Wide Web, locate an interview with a person who has lived in a new culture. In class, discuss the person's intercultural experience. Focus on the differences in values and assumptions between the two societies in which the individual has lived, and on any problems resulting from these differences. Compare this person's experiences with your own.

Writing Follow-up

Follow up the discussion activity you chose (item 1, 2, or 3) with the matching writing assignment below.

- 1 Imagine you are a member of a government agency that helps immigrants adapt to your country. You have been asked to speak to a large group of new arrivals. The topic of your presentation is "How to Better Understand Your New Homeland." Write a short speech welcoming the immigrants to your country and discussing the major values and assumptions they should be aware of in order to adapt more easily and avoid cross-cultural misunderstandings.
- 2 Write one or two paragraphs describing the values reflected in the proverbs you selected and their cross-cultural equivalents. What conclusions can you draw about cultural variations in beliefs, attitudes, and other patterns?
- 3 Briefly, compare the intercultural experience of the person interviewed with an experience you've had. Focus on similarities and differences.

CORE READING 2

Where Do We Stand?

Journal Writing

In your journal, **freewrite** for ten minutes on the topic of nonverbal communication. Don't worry about spelling, grammar, punctuation, or organization. Just write for ten minutes, without stopping, about whatever comes to mind when you think of nonverbal communication. (See the discussion of freewriting, a prewriting strategy, on page 114.) Then share your ideas with several classmates.

Previewing the Topic

Specialists in the field of communication look at three factors when trying to determine what people really mean when they are speaking: (1) the literal meaning of the words (the verbal element); (2) the manner of speaking, including tone, volume, pitch, rhythm, and tempo (the vocal element); and (3) the speaker's body movements, especially facial expressions (the nonverbal element, sometimes called body language). Think of a face-to-face conversation you had recently. As the two of you talked, what percentage of the conversation did each element – the verbal, the vocal, and the nonverbal – play in conveying meaning? Write your answers in the blanks. Then share your answer with the rest of the class.

Verbal = _____% Vocal = _____% Nonverbal = _____%

Agreeing and Disagreeing

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Answer in the context of the culture with which you are most familiar. Fill in each blank with SA (strongly agree), A (agree), U (undecided), D (disagree), or SD (strongly disagree). Then share your responses with several classmates.

- _____ 1 People usually greet each other with some form of touching.
- _____ 2 It is common for students to avoid eye contact when being reprimanded by a teacher.
- _____ 3 Men frequently link arms or hold hands in public.
- _____ 4 People tend to gesture a lot with their hands while conversing.
- _____ 5 People often smile at each other when passing on the sidewalk.
- _____ 6 Silence is a strong cultural value.
- _____ 7 People often show physical affection in public.
- _____ 8 When people converse, they usually stand very close to each other.

Taking Notes While You Read

As you read the article, underline behavior of various cultures. Indicate whether the behavior indicates a difference or similarity.



Where Do We Stand?

Lisa Davis

In the following article, Lisa Davis discusses differences in the use of personal space arising from these differences. "Where Do We Stand?" In *Health* in 1990.

Call it the dance of the jet set. In the East, say, falls into conversational step forward. The American edges backward. A little more, the American retreats. "By Peter Bechtold, of the State Department, American in each corner of the world."

What do you do when a person from the other unaccountably comes in speaking different languages? The problem's a little tougher, but



¹ jet set: Wealthy people who travel

Taking Notes While You Read

As you read the article, underline or highlight the passages describing the nonverbal behavior of various cultures. Then, in the margin next to each marked passage, indicate whether the behavior is commonly seen in your culture.



Where Do We Stand?

Lisa Davis

In the following article, Lisa Davis, a freelance writer in the United States, focuses on cultural differences in the use of personal space – one type of nonverbal communication – and on problems arising from these differences. “Where Do We Stand?” was originally published in the magazine *In Health* in 1990.

Call it the dance of the jet set,¹ the diplomat’s tango: A man from the Middle East, say, falls into conversation with an American, becomes animated, takes a step forward. The American makes a slight postural adjustment, shifts his feet, edges backward. A little more talk and the Arab advances; a little more talk and the American retreats. “By the end of the cocktail party,” says Middle East expert Peter Bechtold, of the State Department’s Foreign Service Institute, “you have an American in each corner of the room, because that’s as far as they can back up.”

What do you do when an amiable chat leaves one person feeling vaguely bullied, the other unaccountably chilled? Things would be simpler if these jet-setters were speaking different languages – they’d just get themselves a translator. But the problem’s a little tougher, because they’re using different languages of space.



¹ jet set: Wealthy people who travel around the world from one fashionable place to another.

Everyone who's ever felt cramped in a crowd knows that the skin is not the body's only boundary. We each wear a zone of privacy like a hoop skirt,² inviting others in or keeping them out with body language – by how closely we approach, the angle at which we face them, the speed with which we break a gaze. It's a subtle code, but one we use and interpret easily, indeed automatically, having absorbed the vocabulary from infancy.

At least, we *assume* we're reading it right. But from culture to culture, from group to group within a single country, even between the sexes, the language of space has distinctive accents, confusing umlauts.³ That leaves a lot of room for misinterpretation, and the stakes have gotten higher as business has become increasingly international and populations multicultural. So a new breed of consultants has appeared in the last few years, interpreting for globe-trotters of all nationalities the meaning and use of personal space.

For instance, says international business consultant Sondra Snowdon, Saudi Arabians like to conduct business discussions from within spitting distance – literally. They bathe in each other's breath as part of building the relationship. "Americans back up," says Snowdon, "but they're harming their chances of winning the contracts." In seminars, Snowdon discusses the close quarters common in Middle Eastern conversations, and has her students practice talking with each other at very chummy distances.

Still, her clients had better be careful where they take their shrunken "space bubble," because cultures are idiosyncratic in their spatial needs. Japanese subways bring people about as close together as humanly possible, for instance, yet even a handshake can be offensively physical in a Japanese office. And, says researcher and writer Mildred Reed Hall, Americans can even make their business counterparts in Japan uncomfortable with the kind of direct eye contact that's normal here. "Not only do most Japanese businessmen not look at you, they keep their eyes down," Hall says. "We look at people for hours, and they feel like they're under a searchlight."

The study of personal space got under way in the early 1950s, when anthropologist Edward Hall described a sort of cultural continuum of personal space. (Hall has frequently collaborated with his wife, Mildred.) According to Hall, on the "high-contact" side of the continuum – in Mediterranean and South American societies, for instance – social conversations include much eye contact, touching, and smiling, typically while standing at a distance of about a foot. On the other end of the scale, say in Northern European cultures, a lingering gaze may feel invasive, manipulative, or disrespectful; a social chat takes place at a remove of about two and a half feet.

In the middle-of-the-road United States, people usually stand about 18 inches apart for this sort of conversation – unless we want to win foreign friends and influence people, in which case, research shows, we'd better adjust our posture. In one study, when British graduate students were trained to adopt Arab patterns of behavior (facing their partners straight on, with lots of eye contact and smiling), Middle Eastern exchange students found them more likable and trustworthy than

typical British students. In contrast, when British students were forced into suspicion: When researchers were forced to talk at an uncomfortable distance, British students' partners as cold and rejecting.

Don't snuggle up too fast, either. In some cultures, their partners when they were in a relationship seems men and women are supposed to operate at arm's length or chest-to-chest. In some, stand a bit closer than do the

It just goes to show that the borders of a single country. Take the Soviet Union. According to some studies, it sparked the study of personal space. Estonians are a non-contact people. Davis. "I went to a 'Hands Around the Baltic' conference. The Russians, on the other hand, are pushy, and the Russians are

Nor are things easier with the middle-class, for instance, that middle-class,

SPATIAL PATTERNS OF PERSONAL SPACE

	Distance	Description
Intimate	Touching to 18 inches	Private situations with people who are emotionally close. If others intrude on this space, they are threatened.
Personal	18 inches to 4 feet	The lower end of the "handshake" zone – the distance at which couples sit in public. For most people, this is the personal space.
Social	4 feet to 12 feet	The lower end of the "handshake" zone – the distance at which salespeople and customers interact. People who are close together, but not touching, are also common at social gatherings.
Public	Greater than 12 feet	Situations where people are not interacting, such as teaching or delivering a lecture.

SOURCE: Adapted from *The Silent Language* by Edward T. Hall (New York: Doubleday Books, 1959), pp. 184–185.

² *hoop skirt*: A long, full skirt supported by a series of connected hoops, or rings (popular in the late 1850s).

³ *umlaut*: Change in a vowel sound, often indicated by the symbol (").

⁴ *cheek-to-jowl*: Cheek-to-cheek (very close).

⁵ *Hands Around the Baltic*: Large group.

⁶ *glitches*: Minor problems or malfunctions.

typical British students. In contrast, the misuse of space can call whole personalities into suspicion: When researchers seated pairs of women for conversation, those forced to talk at an uncomfortably large distance were more likely to describe their partners as cold and rejecting.

Don't snuggle up too fast, though. Men in that study were more irritated by their partners when they were forced to talk at close range. Spatially speaking, it seems men and women are subtly foreign to each other. No matter whether a society operates at arm's length or cheek-to-jowl,⁴ the women look at each other more and stand a bit closer than do the men.

It just goes to show that you can't take things for granted even within the borders of a single country. Take that unwilling amalgamation of ethnic minorities, the Soviet Union. According to psychologist Robert Sommer, who along with Hall sparked the study of personal space, spatial needs collide in the republics. "The Estonians are a non-contact people," says Sommer, of the University of California at Davis. "I went to a 'Hands Around the Baltic'⁵ event, and nobody touched hands. The Russians, on the other hand, are high-contact. The Estonians say the Russians are pushy, and the Russians say the Estonians are cold."

Nor are things easier within the United States. Researchers have found, for instance, that middle-class, Caucasian schoolteachers often jump to mistaken

conclusions when dealing with a child from a different background: If a girl from an Asian family averts her eyes out of respect for her teacher's authority, the teacher may well go on alert, convinced that the child is trying to hide some misbehavior. Ethnically diverse workplaces can be similarly booby-trapped.

Such glitches⁶ are all the more likely because spatial behavior is automatic – it snaps into focus only when someone doesn't play by the rules. Say an American businessman is alone in a roomy elevator when another man enters. The newcomer fails to perform the national ritual of taking a corner and staring into

SPATIAL PATTERNS OF NORTH AMERICANS

	Distance	Description	Voice
Intimate	Touching to 18 inches	Private situations with people who are emotionally close. If others invade this space, they feel threatened or angry.	Whisper
Personal	18 inches to 4 feet	The lower end is "handshake" distance – the distance most couples stand in public. Friends also use the personal zone.	Soft voice
Social	4 feet to 12 feet	The lower end is the distance between salespeople and customers and between people who work together. This zone is also common in social gatherings.	Full voice
Public	Greater than 12 feet	Situations such as teaching in a classroom or delivering a speech.	Loud voice

SOURCE: Adapted from *The Silent Language* by Edward Hall (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), pp. 184–185.

⁴ cheek-to-jowl: Cheek-to-cheek (very close).

⁵ Hands Around the Baltic: Large group of people expressing solidarity by holding hands in a long line.

⁶ glitches: Minor problems or malfunctions.

space; instead, he stands a few inches away, smiling, which is simple politeness in some cultures. "You start to search for a reasonable explanation," says psychologist Eric Knowles, at the University of Arkansas. "In many cases you come up with one without even being aware of it. You say, 'Is this guy a pickpocket? Is he psychotic?' If no explanation seems to fit, you just think, 'This guy's weird, I better get out of here.'"

In fact, such caution is not always unwarranted, because an abnormal use of space can indicate that something odd is going on. Research has shown that when people with schizophrenia approach another person, they often either get closer than normal or stay unusually distant. And a small study of prisoners seemed to show that those with a history of violence needed up to three times the space taken by nonviolent inmates. These are reminders that the human need for space is based in an animal reality: The closer you allow a stranger, the more vulnerable you become.

But the spatial differences among cultures point to something beyond self-protection. Anthropologist Edward Hall suggests that a culture's use of space is also evidence of a reliance on one sense over another: Middle Easterners get much of their information through their senses of smell and touch, he says, which require a close approach; Americans rely primarily on visual information, backing up in order to see an intelligible picture.

Conversational distances also tend to reflect the standard greeting distance in each culture, says State Department expert Bechtold. Americans shake hands, and then talk at arm's length. Arabs do a Hollywood-style, cheek-to-cheek social kiss, and their conversation is similarly up close and personal. And, at a distance great enough to keep heads from knocking together – about two feet – the Japanese bow and talk to each other. On the other hand, the need for more or less space may reflect something of a cultural temperament. “There’s no word for privacy in Arab cultures,” says Bechtold. “They think it means loneliness.”

Whatever their origin, spatial styles are very real. In fact, even those who set out to transgress find it uncomfortable to intrude on the space of strangers, says psychologist John R. Aiello, at Rutgers University. "I've had students say, 'Boy, that was the hardest thing I ever had to do – to stand six inches away when I was asking those questions.'"

Luckily, given coaching and time, it seems to get easier to acculturate to foreign 17
habits of contact. Says Bechtold, "You often see men holding hands in the Middle
East and walking down the street together. It's just that they're concerned and don't
want you to cross the street unescorted, but I've had American pilots come in here
and say, 'I don't want some s.o.b.⁷ holding my hand.' Then I see them there, holding
the hand of a Saudi.

“Personal space isn’t so hard for people to learn,” Bechtold adds. “What is really 18 much harder is the business of dinner being served at midnight.”

⁷ *s.o.b.*: Son of a bitch; vulgar term referring to an offensive or disagreeable person, usually a male.

Reading Journal

In your journal, write all

- 1 You've probably noticed that people from different cultures have different attitudes on their cultural background.
- 2 Discuss a misunderstanding that has occurred in nonverbal behavior.
- 3 Choose a topic of your own choice.

Main Ideas

Answer the following questions about the article. Then share your answers with a partner.

- 1 Which types of nonverbal communication are most important in the article “Where Do We
- 2 What is the major cause of nonverbal communication breakdown in the article “Where Do We
- 3 What is the main point of the article “Where Do We

Reflecting on Content

Answer the following questions with observations.

- 1 In paragraph 4, Davis
of space like a spoke
- 2 Why do you think d
world? Are there an
almost every society
- 3 How do you think D
misunderstandings t

A Writer's Technique

Review the discussion

The following four general details in the reading text may come from another paragraph in the text. Use your answers with a partner.

- 1 But from culture to
between the sexes, t
umlauts. (par. 4)

Reading Journal

In your journal, write about one of the following topics.

- 1 You've probably noticed differences in people's nonverbal behavior depending on their cultural background or their nationality. Describe one difference.
- 2 Discuss a misunderstanding you've experienced as a result of cultural differences in nonverbal behavior.
- 3 Choose a topic of your own related to the reading.

Main Ideas

Answer the following questions, referring to the notes you took when reading the article. Then share your answers with a partner.

- 1 Which types of nonverbal communication are mentioned in the reading?
- 2 What is the major cause of the nonverbal conflicts described in the article?
- 3 What is the main point Davis makes in the article? Summarize her central idea in one or two sentences. Use your own words. Begin with the sentence *In her article "Where Do We Stand?," Lisa Davis maintains that . . .*

Reflecting on Content

Answer the following questions with a partner. When possible, support your answers with observations based on your own experiences.

- 1 In paragraph 4, Davis refers to "the language of space." In which ways is the use of space like a spoken language? Think of at least two similarities.
- 2 Why do you think differences in nonverbal communication exist around the world? Are there any contexts in which nonverbal behaviors are the same in almost every society? Explain your answer.
- 3 How do you think Davis would recommend avoiding intercultural misunderstandings that result from differences in body language?

A Writer's Technique: Supporting Details

Review the discussion of supporting details on page 14.

The following four general statements appear in Davis's article. Find one or two details in the reading that support or illustrate each general idea. The supporting details may come from the same paragraph as the general statement or from another paragraph in the article. Describe these details in your own words. Share your answers with a partner.

- 1 But from culture to culture, from group to group within a single country, even between the sexes, the language of space has distinctive accents, confusing umlauts. (par. 4)

- 2 Spatially speaking, it seems men and women are subtly foreign to each other. (par. 9)
- 3 It just goes to show that you can't take things for granted even within the borders of a single country. (par. 10)
- 4 Such glitches are all the more likely because spatial behavior is automatic – it snaps into focus only when someone doesn't play by the rules. (par. 12)

Vocabulary: Idioms

An **idiom** is a phrase or an expression with a special meaning that is different from the individual meanings of the words – for example, *to sleep like a log* means to sleep very soundly; *to rain cats and dogs* means to rain heavily. Because idioms occur frequently in English and because their meaning cannot be determined from the literal definitions of the words, understanding idioms is essential for effective communication.

Many idioms in English are based on parts of the body – for example, *to bang one's head against a wall*, which means to waste time on a hopeless activity, and *to pull someone's leg*, which means to play a joke on someone by saying something that is not true.

Think of five idioms based on parts of the body. Give the meaning of each idiom and use the idiom correctly in a sentence (as in the example below). You may use a dictionary to help you. Then share the idioms with several classmates.

Idiom: *to cross one's fingers (for someone)*

Meaning: *to wish someone good luck*

Sentence: *I'll cross my fingers (for you) when you take the test.*

Vocabulary in Context

Locate the following italicized vocabulary items in the reading and see if you can determine their meaning from the context. Then think of an example or situation to illustrate each item, using your personal experience if possible. Do not just define the italicized words and expressions. When you are done, share your answers with a partner.

- 1 a person with whom you have an *amiable* relationship (par. 2)
- 2 a *distinctive* type of food, clothing, or architecture that you've encountered in a new culture (par. 4)
- 3 an *idiosyncratic* way of dealing with an issue or a problem (par. 6)
- 4 a way in which a teacher might communicate nonverbally that it was time for a student to stop *lingering* in her office (par. 7)
- 5 an example of *manipulative* behavior (par. 7)
- 6 something you think many people in your culture *take for granted*, and why (par. 10)

- 7 an example of a person
- 8 one or two ways to *av*
- 9 an example of an *unw*
- 10 one or two reasons *so*
(par. 13)

Discussion

Choose one of the followi

- 1 Demonstrate some com regarding their appropri following comments ar

Comments

"I don't know."

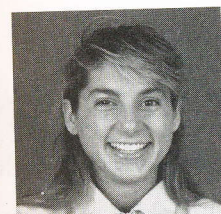
"That person is intellig

"That's expensive."

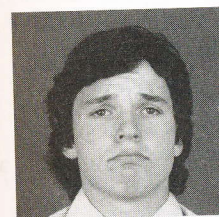
"That was stupid."

"I feel happy / sad / an surprised / ashamed

- 2 Below are seven photo beneath each picture, is experiencing. Then group. Do you think t all cultures?



a. _____



e. _____

- 7 an example of a person *jumping to a conclusion* about a foreign culture (par. 11)
- 8 one or two ways to *avert* cross-cultural misunderstandings (par. 11)
- 9 an example of an *unwarranted* statement or behavior (par. 13)
- 10 one or two reasons someone might feel *vulnerable* living in a new culture (par. 13)

Discussion

Choose one of the following activities to do with a partner or in a small group.

- 1 Demonstrate some common gestures in your culture and discuss restrictions regarding their appropriate use. Next, show how you would indicate the following comments and behaviors nonverbally:

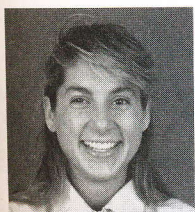
Comments

- "I don't know."
- "That person is intelligent / crazy / beautiful."
- "That's expensive."
- "That was stupid."
- "I feel happy / sad / angry / afraid / surprised / ashamed / disgusted."

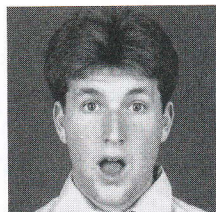
Behaviors

- greeting someone
- saying goodbye to someone
- insulting someone
- flirting with someone
- getting a waiter's attention
- ending a conversation

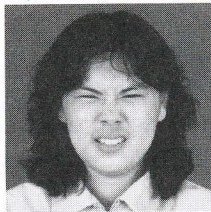
- 2 Below are seven photographs showing universal facial expressions. In the space beneath each picture, write an adjective that describes the emotion the person is experiencing. Then compare your answers with those of your partner or group. Do you think there are any other facial expressions of emotion seen in all cultures?



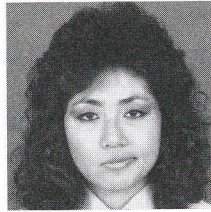
a. _____



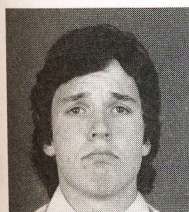
b. _____



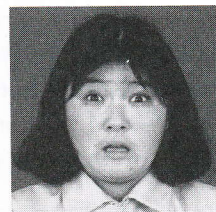
c. _____



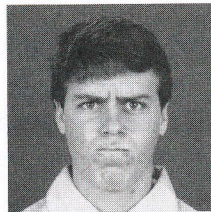
d. _____



e. _____



f. _____



g. _____

- 3 Do a library or Internet search of a particular form of nonverbal communication. Look for information dealing with cross-cultural similarities and differences. In class, discuss the material you found with your partner or group. Then share your findings and conclusions with the rest of the class.

Writing Follow-up

Follow up the discussion activity you chose (item 1, 2, or 3) with the matching writing assignment below.

- 1 Imagine that two people from different societies have a misunderstanding based on cultural variations in the use of gestures or another form of nonverbal communication. Write two paragraphs discussing the problem. In the first paragraph, describe the misunderstanding; in the second paragraph, explain the reason for it.
- 2 Describe the process of analyzing the pictures as though you were describing a small scientific experiment. Write up what happened, give the results, and interpret them.
- 3 In one or two paragraphs, summarize the information you found in your library or Internet search.

CORE READING 3

Time Talks, with an Accent

Journal Writing

in class

In your journal, write for ten to fifteen minutes about a cultural difference you've noticed in perceptions of time, especially the pace of life and attitudes toward punctuality (arriving on time, early, and late). You may focus on different countries or various parts of your own country. Then share your observations with several classmates.

Previewing the Topic

In a small group, discuss cultural differences in concepts of punctuality. Consider the following questions: If you were attending a dinner party at a friend's house, when would you typically arrive? At the scheduled time? Earlier? Later? What would be considered an early or a late arrival? Would the concept of punctuality be the same for someone going to a class, a job, or an interview, or meeting with a friend?

Agreeing and Disagreeing

To what extent do you agree or disagree with SA (strongly agree), A (agree), D (disagree), or SA (strongly disagree). Then share your response.

- 1 Punctuality is a strict concept.
- 2 One of the hardest concepts to understand is the concept of time.
- 3 In my culture, it is important to be on time.
- 4 It doesn't make much sense to determine people's behavior by their culture.
- 5 Tradition is highly important in my culture.
- 6 In my culture, one should not be late for purchases, and business.
- 7 Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.
- 8 Getting together with friends is a pleasure in life.
- 9 In my culture, schedule is important.
- 10 Time is a limited resource.

Taking Notes While You Read

As you read the selection, note the author's discussion in perceptions of time and how they differ from those in your culture.



Time Talks, with an Accent

Robert Levine

Robert Levine is a social psychologist at the University of California, Fresno. He has lived and taught in several countries. The following reading is an excerpt from his book *Time and the Human Mind*, which discusses cross-cultural differences in concepts of time.

Every culture has its own way of measuring time. A people is to know the value of time.

Time has intrigued me for as long as I can remember. Initially taught that time is measured in hours and days, months and years, numbers never seemed to add up.

Agreeing and Disagreeing

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Fill in each blank with SA (strongly agree), A (agree), U (undecided), D (disagree), or SD (strongly disagree). Then share your responses with several classmates.

- ___ 1 Punctuality is a strong value in my culture.
- ___ 2 One of the hardest things for many people to adjust to in a new culture is the concept of time.
- ___ 3 In my culture, it is acceptable for students to arrive late to class.
- ___ 4 It doesn't make much sense to worry about the future, since fate largely determines people's lives.
- ___ 5 Tradition is highly valued in my culture.
- ___ 6 In my culture, one has to wait for a lot of things, such as trains, store purchases, and bank transactions.
- ___ 7 Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.
- ___ 8 Getting together with friends and family is one of the important pleasures in life.
- ___ 9 In my culture, schedules, plans, and deadlines are easily changed.
- ___ 10 Time is a limited resource and shouldn't be wasted.

Taking Notes While You Read

As you read the selection, note in the margin the cultural differences the author discusses in perceptions of time. Also indicate which perceptions are similar to and different from those in your culture.



Time Talks, with an Accent

Robert Levine

Robert Levine is a social psychologist and professor of psychology at California State University, Fresno. He has lived and taught in many countries, including Brazil, Japan, and Sweden. The following reading is an excerpt from Levine's book *A Geography of Time* (1997), which explores cross-cultural differences in concepts of time – a subject to which he has devoted his career.

Every culture has its own unique set of temporal fingerprints. To know a people is to know the time values they live by.

Jeremy Rifkin, *Time Wars*

Time has intrigued me for as long as I remember. Like most young Americans, I was initially taught that time is simply measured by a clock – in seconds and minutes, hours and days, months and years. But when I looked around at my elders, the numbers never seemed to add up the same way twice. Why was it, I wondered, that

some adults appeared to be perpetually running out of daylight hours while others seemed to have all the time in the world? I thought of this second group of people – the ones who would go to the movies in the middle of the workday or take their families on six-month sabbaticals to the South Pacific – as temporal millionaires, and I vowed to become one of them.

When planning my career, I ignored my peers' unwavering concern with the amount of money a job would pay and tuned in instead to the temporal lifestyle it offered. To what extent would I be able to set my own pace? How much control would I have over my time? Could I take a bike ride during the day? Thoreau¹ spoke to me when he observed, "To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts." I chose a profession – that of a university professor – which offers the temporal mobility I sought. And to my good fortune, I encountered a specialty – social psychology – that has allowed me to pursue the very concept of time that fascinated me as a child.

I trace the beginning of my scientific journey to an experience early in my career. . . . I had just begun an appointment as a visiting professor of psychology at the Federal University in Niteroi, Brazil, a midsized city across the bay from Rio de Janeiro. I arrived anxious to observe at first hand just what characteristics of this alien environment would require the greatest readjustment from me. From my past travel experiences, I anticipated difficulties with such issues as the language, my privacy, and standards of cleanliness. But these turned out to be a piece of cake compared to the distress that Brazilians' ideas of time and punctuality were to cause me.

I was aware before arriving, of course, of the stereotype of the *amanhã* attitude of Brazilians (the Portuguese version of *a mañana*²), whereby it is said that whenever it is conceivably possible the business of today is put off until tomorrow. I knew I'd need to slow down and to reduce my expectations of accomplishment. But I was a kid from Brooklyn,³ where one is taught at an early age to move fast or get out of the way. Years ago I had learned to survive life in the foreign culture of Fresno, California, a city where even laid-back Los Angelenos must learn to decelerate. Adjusting to the pace of life in Brazil, I figured, would call for no more than a bit of fine tuning. What I got instead was a dose of culture shock I wouldn't wish on a hijacker.

My lessons began soon after arriving. As I left home for my first day of teaching, I asked someone the time. It was 9:05 A.M., allowing me plenty of time to get to my 10 o'clock lecture. After what I judged to be half an hour, I glanced at a clock I was passing. It said 10:20! In panic, I broke for the classroom, followed by gentle calls of "Alô, Professor" and "Tudo bem, Professor?"⁴ from unhurried students, many of whom, I later realized, were my own. I arrived breathless to find an empty room.

Frantically, I exited the room to ask a passerby the time. "Nine forty-five," came the answer. No, that couldn't be. I asked someone else. "Nine fifty-five." Another

¹ Thoreau, Henry David (1817–1862): Well-known U.S. writer who spent two years living by himself in the woods and observing nature (an experience he described in his book *Walden*).

² *a mañana*: Spanish for "tomorrow."

³ Brooklyn: One of the five major divisions, called boroughs, of New York City.

⁴ "Alô, Professor" and "Tudo bem, Professor?": Portuguese for "Hello, Professor" and "How are you, Professor?"

squinted down at his watch in a nearby office. Timepieces are consistently

My class was scheduled to arrive after 10:30. A few of the latecomers wore thick coats and although a few apologized, they assumed that it was late. They assumed that

That Brazilians would have a personal experience to share. I was an hour late for a two-hour class. The class came to a close

Back home in California, the class hour is ending. The students are screaming: "I'm hungry," "I need to suffocate if you keep going," "unbearable at two minutes," "to the hour for graduate school," "only a few students left," "minutes, and some continue," "remaining students kick," "thirsty / bathroom / suffocate," "lingering to my superb table," "on statistics in halting Portuguese," "of understanding my student," "morning with my new class," "Neither she nor her secretaries," "the magazines in the waiting area," "copy of *Sports Illustrated*."

At 11:30 the secretary arrived with traditional Brazilian drinks, which, as best I can tell, were good and left. At 11:45 my new secretary arrived. Ten minutes later she brought mail. At 12:20, she finally arrived. I waited, chatted for a few minutes, appointment for which she had a habit to make lots of appointments. She apparently liked appointments.

Later that day I had a meeting. When I got to my "office" I found them. They seemed undisturbed by my hurry to begin. One had a copy of *Illustrated* (which, I noted

⁵ *meus pobres estudantes*: Portuguese for "my poor students."

squinted down at his watch and called out proudly: "Exactly nine forty-three." The clock in a nearby office read 3:15. I had received my first two lessons: Brazilian timepieces are consistently inaccurate; and nobody seemed to mind but me.

My class was scheduled from ten until noon. Many students came late. Several arrived after 10:30. A few showed up closer to eleven. Two came after that. All of the latecomers wore the relaxed smiles I later came to enjoy. Each one greeted me, and although a few apologized briefly, none seemed terribly concerned about being late. They assumed that I understood.

That Brazilians would arrive late was no surprise, although it was certainly a new personal experience to watch students casually enter a classroom more than one hour late for a two-hour class. The real surprise came at noon that first day, when the class came to a close.

Back home in California, I never need to look at a clock to know when the class hour is ending. The shuffling of books is accompanied by strained expressions screaming: "I'm hungry / I'm thirsty / I've got to go to the bathroom / I'm going to suffocate if you keep us one more second." (The pain, I find, usually becomes unbearable at two minutes to the hour for undergraduates and at about five minutes to the hour for graduate students.) But when noon arrived for my first Brazilian class, only a few students left right away. Others slowly drifted out during the next fifteen minutes, and some continued asking me questions long after that. When several remaining students kicked off their shoes at 12:30, I went into my own hungry / thirsty / bathroom / suffocation plea. (I could not, with any honesty, attribute their lingering to my superb teaching style. I had, in fact, just spent two hours lecturing on statistics in halting Portuguese. Forgive me, *meus pobres estudantes*.⁵) In the hope of understanding my students' behavior, I made an appointment for 11 A.M. the next morning with my new *chefe*, or department head. I arrived at her office on time. Neither she nor her secretary was there. In fact, I had to turn on the lights to read the magazines in the waiting room: a year-old copy of *Time* and a three-year-old copy of *Sports Illustrated*.

At 11:30 the secretary arrived, said *alô*, asked me if I wanted a *cafézinho* (the traditional Brazilian drink consisting of one-half thick coffee and one-half sugar, which, as best I can tell, gets everyone so wired that they no longer bother to move), and left. At 11:45 my new *chefe* arrived, also offered me a *cafézinho*, and also went off. Ten minutes later she returned, sat down at her desk, and began reading her mail. At 12:20, she finally called me into her office, casually apologized for making me wait, chatted for a few minutes and then excused herself to "run" to another appointment for which she was late. I learned later that this was no lie. It was her habit to make lots of appointments for the same time and to be late for all of them. She apparently liked appointments.

Later that day I had a meeting scheduled with several students from my class. When I got to my "office" two of them were already there and acting quite at home. They seemed undisturbed that I was a few minutes late and, in fact, were in no hurry to begin. One had kicked his feet up on my desk and was reading his *Sports Illustrated* (which, I noted, was only three months old).

⁵ *meus pobres estudantes*: Portuguese for "my poor students."

Some fifteen minutes after the scheduled conclusion I stood up and explained that I had other appointments waiting. The students stayed put and asked pleasantly, "Who with?" When I listed the names of two of their associates, one fellow excitedly reported that he knew them both. He rushed to the door and escorted one of them from the waiting area – the other hadn't arrived yet – into my office. They all then proceeded to chit-chat and turn the pages of the *Sports Illustrated*. By the time his associate sauntered in, five minutes before the scheduled conclusion of our appointment, I was beginning to lose track of who was early and who was late – which, I was eventually to learn, was exactly the lesson that I should have been learning. For now, though, I was just plain confused.

My last appointment of the day was with the owner of an apartment I wanted to rent. This time I thought I could spot the little train coming. As soon as I arrived I asked his secretary how long I would have to wait. She said that her boss was running late. "How late?," I asked. "A half an hour, *mais ou menos*,"⁶ she replied. Would I like a *cafézinho*? I declined and said I'd be back in twenty minutes. Upon my return, she said it would be a little while longer. I left again. When I came back ten minutes later, she told me her boss had gotten tired of waiting for me and had left for the day. When I began to snap out an angry message to give to her Sr. Landlord, the secretary explained that I'd left him no choice but to skip out on me. "Don't you understand, he's the owner and you're not. You're an arrogant man, Dr. Levine." That was the last time I tried to outmaneuver a Brazilian at the waiting game.

During my year in Brazil, I was repeatedly bewildered, frustrated, fascinated, and obsessed by the customs and ideas of social time that Brazilians sent my way. The reason that Brazilians' rules of punctuality so confused me, it soon became apparent, was that they are inseparably intertwined with cultural values. And when we enter the web of culture, answers come neither simply nor cleanly. Cultural beliefs are like the air we breathe, so taken for granted that they are rarely discussed or even

articulated. But there is often a volatile reaction when these unwritten rules are violated. Unsuspecting outsiders like myself can walk into a cultural minefield.

No beliefs are more ingrained and subsequently hidden than those about time. Almost thirty years ago anthropologist Edward Hall labeled rules of social time the "silent language." The world over, children simply pick up their society's conceptions of early and late; of waiting and rushing; of the past, the

present, and the future. There is or for strangers who stumble in a sense they bring with them and

Brazil made it clear to me that what was saying was no simple matter. I designed my first systematic exploration of Brazilians' beliefs and rules about time but eventually my appreciation of what I found so intrigued me that I had to research both the psychological and sociological aspects. This further study has raised questions about physical and psychological well-being that has taken me through many of the corners of the rest of the world. It has confirmed that the time of their lives comprises every level: from culture to culture. Most of all, I have learned, the

THE PACE OF LIFE IN SIX COUNTRIES

	Accuracy of Bank Clocks	Walking Speed	Post Office Speed
Japan	1	1	1
United States	2	3	2
England	4	2	3
Italy	5	4	6
Taiwan	3	5	4
Indonesia	6	6	5

The first indicator of time sense refers to the accuracy of a country's bank clocks, the second to the speed at which pedestrians walk, and the third to the average time it takes a postal clerk to sell a single stamp. Numbers (1 is the top value) indicate the comparative rankings of each country for each indicator of time sense.

SOURCE: "Social Time: The Heartbeat of Culture" by Robert Levine and Ellen Wolff, (*Psychology Today* 19, 1985: pp. 28–35)

⁶ *mais ou menos*: Portuguese for "more or less."

Reading Journal

In your journal, write about one

- 1 Explain the significance of time
- 2 Discuss a difficulty or misunderstanding about cultural differences in perception
- 3 Choose a topic of your own

Main Ideas

Answer the following question in a short selection. Then share your answer.

- 1 How does Levine define the concept of "social time"?
- 2 According to Levine, why is time so important in Brazilian culture?
- 3 What is the main point Levine makes in the excerpt "Time Talks, with..."?

Reflecting on Content

Answer the following question in a short selection. Then share your answers with observations based on your own experience.

- 1 What does Levine mean when he says that time is "inseparably intertwined with" a society's concept of time?

present, and the future. There is no dictionary to define these rules of time for them, or for strangers who stumble over the maddening incongruities between the time sense they bring with them and the one they face in a new land. . . .

Brazil made it clear to me that time was talking. But understanding what it was saying was no simple matter. After several months of temporal blunders, I designed my first systematic experiments about time in an attempt to understand Brazilians' beliefs and rules about punctuality. This work, at first to my frustration but eventually my appreciation, raised more questions than it answered. What I found so intrigued me that I have spent most of the past two decades continuing to research both the psychology of time and the psychology of places. My research has evolved from studies of punctuality to those about the broader pace of life; further study has raised questions about the consequences the pace of life has for the physical and psychological well-being of people and their communities. This work has taken me through many of the cities of the United States and across much of the rest of the world. It has confirmed my earliest intuitions: that how people construe the time of their lives comprises a world of diversity. There are drastic differences on every level: from culture to culture, city to city, and from neighbor to neighbor. And most of all, I have learned, the time on the clock only begins to tell the story.

Reading Journal

In your journal, write about one of the following topics.

- 1 Explain the significance of the title of the article, "Time Talks, with an Accent."
- 2 Discuss a difficulty or misunderstanding you've experienced as a result of cultural differences in perceptions of time.
- 3 Choose a topic of your own related to the reading.

Main Ideas

Answer the following questions, referring to the notes you took when reading the selection. Then share your answers with a partner.

- 1 How does Levine define the term "social time"? What are its components?
- 2 According to Levine, why is adjusting to a foreign concept of time so difficult?
- 3 What is the main point Levine makes in the reading? Summarize his central idea in one or two sentences. Use your own words. Begin with the sentence *In the excerpt "Time Talks, with an Accent," Robert Levine maintains that . . .*

Reflecting on Content

Answer the following questions with a partner. When possible, support your answers with observations based on your own experiences.

- 1 What does Levine mean when he says that the rules of punctuality are "inseparably intertwined with cultural values" (par. 14)? In which ways does a society's concept of time reflect cultural values?

- 2 Edward Hall, a noted intercultural scholar, refers to rules of social time as a “silent language” (par. 15). What does he mean by this? How does a culture’s concept of time resemble a language? Think of two or three similarities.
- 3 What feelings does Levine experience while encountering cultural differences in perceptions of time? Have you experienced any of these feelings when confronted with a different orientation to time?

A Writer’s Technique: Supporting Details

Review the discussion of supporting details on page 14.

One type of evidence that writers frequently use to support their main points, especially in narrative and descriptive essays, is the **anecdote** – a brief story that presents an interesting or amusing incident. Sometimes these anecdotes are based on the author’s personal experiences and sometimes on other peoples’ experiences with which the author is familiar.

Answer the following questions. Then compare your responses with a partner.

- 1 In “Time Talks, with an Accent,” Levine provides a number of personal anecdotes to illustrate his main idea. The paragraphs listed below contain anecdotes. Reread the paragraphs and explain the single main idea that all the anecdotes illustrate.
 - Paragraph 10
 - Paragraphs 11–12
 - Paragraph 13
- 2 How effective do you think Levine’s anecdotes are in illustrating his thesis? Should he have included any other type of detail to support his points?

Vocabulary: Guessing Meaning from the Context

If you are reading a passage and come across an unfamiliar word or expression, don’t immediately reach for your dictionary. Often by looking at the context of the vocabulary item – the sentence and paragraph in which the word or expression appears – you can get a good sense of its general meaning. Good readers often use **context clues** to figure out the meaning of an unknown vocabulary item. When you use context clues, you use the words you are familiar with in a passage and your own experiences to make an educated guess about the meaning of an unfamiliar word or expression. Developing the ability to guess meaning from context will help improve your reading comprehension and build your vocabulary.

Look at these sentences from “Time Talks, with an Accent” and do the following.

- Guess the meaning of each italicized word or expression from the context.
- Write one or two **synonyms** for each vocabulary item, or write your own definition. A synonym is a word with the same, or nearly the same, meaning. Do this exercise first without using a dictionary.
- Write a sentence of your own, using the vocabulary item correctly.

Example: *Why was running o in the wor*

Synonyms: *continual*

Sentence: *Because o problems*

- 1 When planning my car amount of money a job it offered. (par. 2)
- 2 From my past travel exp the language, my privac to be a *piece of cake* com punctuality were to cau
- 3 Back home in California the class hour is ending expressions screaming: “ bathroom / I’m going to
- 4 The reason that Brazilia apparent, was that they when we enter the web (par. 14)
- 5 Cultural beliefs are like rarely discussed or even these unwritten rules are

Vocabulary in Context

Locate the following italicized words in the passage. You can determine their meaning by looking at the context situation to illustrate each word. Write a sentence just define the italicized word. Compare your answers with a partner.

- 1 something about a foreign
- 2 something you could com be uncommon in your cu
- 3 a reason you might want
- 4 a time when you had to a
- 5 something to which you once visited (par. 9)
- 6 whether it is common in speak with a professor (p
- 7 an aspect of life in a new

Example: *Why was it, I wondered, that some adults appeared to be perpetually running out of daylight hours while others seemed to have all the time in the world?* (par. 1)

Synonyms: *continually, forever*

Sentence: *Because of his lack of flexibility, Ari was perpetually running into problems while living abroad.*

- 1 When planning my career, I ignored my peers' *unwavering* concern with the amount of money a job would pay and tuned in instead to the temporal lifestyle it offered. (par. 2)
- 2 From my past travel experiences, I anticipated difficulties with such issues as the language, my privacy, and standards of cleanliness. But these turned out to be a *piece of cake* compared to the distress that Brazilians' ideas of time and punctuality were to cause me. (par. 3)
- 3 Back home in California, I never need to look at a clock to know when the class hour is ending. The *shuffling* of books is accompanied by strained expressions screaming: "I'm hungry / I'm thirsty / I've got to go to the bathroom / I'm going to suffocate if you keep us one more second." (par. 9)
- 4 The reason that Brazilians' rules of punctuality so confused me, it soon became apparent, was that they are inseparably *intertwined* with cultural values. And when we enter the web of culture, answers come neither simply nor cleanly. (par. 14)
- 5 Cultural beliefs are like the air we breathe, so taken for granted that they are rarely discussed or even articulated. But there is often a *volatile* reaction when these unwritten rules are violated. (par. 14)

Vocabulary in Context

Locate the following italicized vocabulary items in the reading and see if you can determine their meaning from the context. Then think of an example or situation to illustrate each item, using your personal experience if possible. Do not just define the italicized words and expressions. When you are done, share your answers with a partner.

- 1 something about a foreign culture that once *intrigued* you, and why (par. 1)
- 2 something you could *conceivably* see yourself doing in a new culture that would be uncommon in your culture (par. 4)
- 3 a reason you might want to *put* one thing off and call another thing off (par. 4)
- 4 a time when you had to accelerate or *decelerate* your pace of life, and why (par. 4)
- 5 something to which you *attribute* a value, belief, or behavior in a culture you once visited (par. 9)
- 6 whether it is common in your culture for students to *linger* after class in order to speak with a professor (par. 9)
- 7 an aspect of life in a new culture that once *bewildered* you (par. 14)

- 8 a belief that is *ingrained* in the minds of most people in your culture (par. 15)
- 9 an *incongruity* between a belief or behavior found in your culture and one found in a different culture (par. 15)
- 10 a *blunder* you once made when in a new culture or community (par. 16)

Discussion

Choose one of the following activities to do with a partner or in a small group.

- 1 Discuss the common perception of time in your culture and any differences you've noticed when in a new culture. Consider the general pace of life; attitude toward punctuality; and orientation to past, present, or future. Discuss your personal experiences with the different perception of time, including any problems or misunderstandings.
- 2 Design a brief questionnaire dealing with cultural perceptions of time. Ask several people from different cultures to respond to the questions, and then analyze their responses. What conclusions can you draw? When you are done, share your findings with the rest of the class.
- 3 Access the National Public Radio Web site <www.npr.org>. Click on *Archives* and search for one of the following broadcast titles (remember to include the quotation marks when you search): "A Geography of Time," "Cultural Perceptions in Time," or "Different Perceptions of Time." Listen to one of these broadcasts and list the various perceptions of time that are mentioned. Then, with your partner or a group, discuss these patterns in the context of the culture with which you are most familiar.

Writing Follow-up

Follow up the discussion activity you chose (item 1, 2, or 3) with the matching writing assignment below.

- 1 Imagine you are a member of an organization that is writing a brochure on cultural patterns in a particular culture or country. You are working on a section dealing with common perceptions of time: general pace of life; attitude toward punctuality; and orientation to past, present, or future. Write a brief discussion of one of these aspects of time to be included in the brochure. Your goal is to help visitors adjust to the culture or country and avoid misunderstandings that result from cultural differences in perceptions of time.
- 2 Write a brief report discussing the results of your questionnaire. What do people's responses have in common? What conclusions can you draw?
- 3 Write one paragraph summarizing the comments you heard on the radio broadcast about cultural differences in perceptions of time. In a second paragraph, discuss your reaction.

MAKING CONNECTION

Answer two or three of the questions below in this chapter.

- 1 The authors of the core text discuss intercultural conflicts and misunderstandings. On these subjects, they attribute tension to the intercultural tension.
- 2 All three authors either discuss or mention misunderstandings. Are there any misunderstandings between the authors?
- 3 In the first reading, Altheide and Contreras contrast them with their own culture. Its opposite, is reflected in the second reading? Give at least one example.
- 4 Reread one of the following U.S. values: "Individualism" or "Achievement, Action." Explain the U.S. perception of time.
- 5 How do the authors of the text use statistics, personal experience, or their main ideas? Be as specific as possible, supporting detail that each author uses.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Answer two or three of the following questions relating to the three core readings in this chapter.

- 1 The authors of the core readings (Althen, Davis, and Levine) describe various intercultural conflicts and misunderstandings. Although they focus on different subjects, they attribute these problems to the same cause. What is the origin of the intercultural tensions that the authors discuss?
- 2 All three authors either state directly or imply ways to minimize cultural misunderstanding. Are there any suggestions that are common to all three of the authors?
- 3 In the first reading, Althen discusses prominent values in the United States and contrasts them with values in other cultures. Which of these values, or its opposite, is reflected in the nonverbal behaviors that Davis discusses in the second reading? Give at least two examples.
- 4 Reread one of the following sections in Althen's chapter dealing with central U.S. values: "Individualism," "Privacy," "The Future, Change, and Progress," or "Achievement, Action, Work, and Materialism." How does this value help explain the U.S. perceptions of time that Levine discusses in the third reading?
- 5 How do the authors of these three readings provide detail (examples, facts, statistics, personal experiences, anecdotes, and quotations) to support their main ideas? Be as specific as possible, referring to at least two types of supporting detail that each author uses.