Now that we are nearing the end of our journey through this textbook, you might ask, How do you really know whether you are a good intercultural communicator? We have covered a lot of topics and discussed some ideas that will help you be a better communicator. But you can't learn how to be a good communicator merely by reading books. Just as in learning to be a good public speaker or a good relational partner, it takes experience. In this chapter, we want to leave you with some specific ideas and suggestions for improving your skills in communicating across cultures.

We can approach intercultural competence in several ways. We begin this chapter with the social science approach, identifying specific components of competence: motivation, knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills. We then turn to interpretive and critical approaches, emphasizing the contextual issues in competence. Finally, we continue our dialectical perspective, combining individual and contextual elements to offer specific suggestions for improving intercultural relations by building alliances and coalitions across cultures.

THE COMPONENTS OF COMPETENCE

What are the things we have to know, the attitudes and behaviors, to make us competent communicators? Do we have to be motivated to be good at intercultural communication? Intercultural communication scholars have been investigating these questions for many years (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Scholars taking a social science perspective have identified four basic components, or building blocks, of intercultural competence: motivation, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors (Wiseman, 2002). We present these components here because we think they serve as a useful starting point. However, interpretive and critical scholars remind us that we need to contextualize these components (Collier, 1998, 2005). We need to ask ourselves, Who came up with these components? Are they applicable to everyone? For example, if a group of Native American scholars came up with guidelines for what it takes to be interculturally competent, would these guidelines apply to other cultural groups? Do the same competencies work in every context? Again, it is useful to remember our dialectical perspective. Intercultural communication competence may rely on individual competence, but context is also important. Let's look first at the individual components.

Social Science Perspective: Individual Components

motivation As an individual component of intercultural communication competence, the desire to make a commitment in relationships, to learn about the self and others, and to remain flexible.

Motivation Perhaps the most important dimension of communication competence is **motivation.** If we aren't motivated to communicate with others, it probably doesn't matter what other skills we possess. We can't assume that people always want to communicate. This is a difficult idea to wrestle with, especially

Martin, J. N. and Nakayama, T. K. (2010). Intercultural Communication in Contexts. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

for those of us who have dedicated our lives to studying and understanding intercultural communication. And yet, motivation is an important aspect of developing intercultural competence.

Why might people not be motivated to engage in intercultural communication? One reason is that members of large, powerful groups often think they don't need to know much about other cultures; there is simply no incentive. In contrast, people from less powerful groups have a strong incentive to learn about and interact with more powerful groups. For example, female managers in corporations are motivated to learn about and adjust to the dominant male norms, Latinos/as are motivated to learn European American norms, and visitors overseas are motivated to learn about and adjust to the norms of foreign cultures. The survival of these less powerful groups often depends on members' motivation to succeed at intercultural interaction (Johnson, 2001).

Sometimes people can *become* motivated to learn about other cultures and to communicate interculturally. For example, the events of 9/11 motivated many U.S. Americans to become more aware of how U.S. worldviews and behavior, on both a personal and a political level, are intertwined with those in other cultures and countries. The increasing levels of violence in the world among religious groups has also motivated people to reach out to those in other cultures. One recently formed group, Women Against War, was started by two women, an Israeli Arab and an Israeli Jew; together they have organized activities and events to advocate for peace and more understanding in Israel. As one of the founders said, "we don't want to see any citizens on both sides killed because of an avoidable war. There is no sense in that." ("Women Demand Peace," 2008).

A second reason that people aren't motivated is because intercultural communication can be uncomfortable. As discussed previously, anxiety, uncertainty, and fear are common aspects of intercultural interactions. And yet, moving out of our "communication comfort zone" often leads to insights into other individuals, groups, and cultures. One of our students, Kati, explains,

> *I think that you learn the most by traveling and/or making a conscious effort to interact with those in another culture or nation or race. Especially being thrust outside of your "comfort zone" (most Americans never get out of their comfort zone) will force you to see the diverse beauty and differences in other cultures.*

Sometimes people do not address delicate intercultural issues out of fear—fear of being isolated from friends and family members who may be prejudiced and not motivated themselves. In one study, college students said they censored their communication in class discussions about race because they were afraid their comments would be taken as offensive, racist, or ignorant; they were afraid of being attacked or yelled at, and they didn't want to be perceived as "trying to prove" they weren't racist (Harris, Miller, & Trego, 2004). Tatum (1997) points out that this fear, and the resulting silences, have huge costs to us as individuals and for our society. Individually, when we are not motivated to reach out across cultural divides, we suffer from distorted perception (we don't really know how individuals from other cultures may view us or a particular situation) and a lack of personal growth. On the societal level, when we are not motivated to embrace

STUDENT VOICES

The following anecdote illustrates how complicated intercultural communication can be. It concerns a well-intentioned individual trying to be sensitive to one group (Native Americans) but inadvertently ignoring the feelings and sensibilities of another (Japanese).

> *I participated in a week-long cross-cultural seminar last summer in which the participants were from a mix of domestic and international cultural groups. On the first day, as an icebreaker, we took turns introducing the person to the left. There were several international students, including an older Japanese woman, who had a little trouble with English. She introduced her partner in halting English but made only one mistake; she said that her partner (a white American woman) was "Native American." She meant to say that her partner was born in America, but her English wasn't quite fluent.*
>
> *Immediately, one of the other members of the group raised her hand and said, "I have an ouch," and proceeded to tell the group how important it was that we be honest and tell others when things were bothering us. She said, further, that it bothered her that this woman had been called a Native American when she was not. She emphasized how important it was that people be labeled accurately. She meant well. But the Japanese woman was mortified. She was embarrassed about her English to begin with, and she was really embarrassed at being singled out as being incorrect in her language. She did not say anything at the time. None of the rest of us in the group knew how distressed she was. As soon as the session was over, she went to the workshop leaders and asked to be transferred out of the group.*
>
> —Mary

other cultures and other ways of thinking and behavior, our organizations suffer from a loss of productivity and human potential (not everyone gets the opportunity to contribute ideas).

Third, motivation is lacking in contexts in which historical events or political circumstances have resulted in communication breakdowns. For example, it is understandable, given the history of animosity in the Middle East, that Israeli and Arab students would not be motivated to communicate with each other. It is also understandable why a Serbian student would not want to room with a Croatian student, or why a Greek Cypriot would not want to forge a friendship with a Turkish Cypriot, given that these two ethnic communities have been engaged in one of the most protracted international disputes of all time.

To use an example closer to home, many blacks and whites in the United States are not motivated to forge friendships with each other. This may be partly due to social pressure. One study investigated why so few whites have black friends and why the interracial marriage rate is so low between whites and blacks. The researchers analyzed data from three separate ethnographic interview studies of whites and blacks and concluded that lack of interracial friendships is not because of lack of interracial contact. They found that 90% of the

whites interviewed grew up in white-only neighborhoods, but even those who grew up in racially mixed neighborhoods and went to racially mixed schools and had the opportunity to form close relationships with African Americans failed to do so. Those who did have black friends as adolescents tended to not maintain these friendships as adults. The researchers conclude that it is not only the social isolation from blacks that prevents whites from forming close friendship. Rather, the limited interaction is a result of "white habitus"—shared negative attitudes about blacks or blaming blacks for not trying harder to make friends with them, and an "oblivion about the racial components of their own socialization" (Bonilla-Silva, Embrick, Ketchum, & Saenz, 2004).

The point here is that it doesn't matter how good a communicator you are if you are not motivated to use those communication skills. For some people, the first step in developing intercultural communication competence may be to examine their motivation to reach out to others who are culturally different.

knowledge As an individual component of intercultural communication competence, the quality of knowing about oneself (that is, one's strengths and weaknesses), others, and various aspects of communication.

Knowledge The **knowledge** component comprises various cognitive aspects of communication competence; it involves what we know about ourselves and others and about various aspects of communication. Perhaps most important is **self-knowledge**—knowing how you may be perceived as a communicator and what your strengths and weaknesses are. How can you know what these are?

self-knowledge Related to intercultural communication competence, the quality of knowing how one is perceived as a communicator, as well as one's strengths and weaknesses.

Acquiring self-knowledge is a long and sometimes complicated process. It involves being open to information coming in many different ways. A white student describes her growing awareness of what it means to be white in the United States after listening to Chicano and African American guest speakers:

> *They each spoke about their experiences that they have had [with others prejudging them]. . . . We discover our white identity by listening to others. We hear these hardships that they have had to endure and we realize that we never have had to experience that. You learn a lot about yourself that way. . . . By listening to our guests speak today, I realized that sometimes other ethnicities might not view my culture very highly.*

We often don't know how we're perceived because we don't search for this information or because there is not sufficient trust in a relationship for people to reveal such things. **Other-knowledge,** or knowledge about how other people think and behave will also help you be a more effective communicator. However, learning about others in only abstract terms can lead to stereotyping. It is often better to learn through relational experience, as this student did:

other-knowledge Related to intercultural communication competence, knowledge about how people from other cultures think and behave that will also help you be a more effective communicator.

> *My friend Jack told me a couple of years ago that he was gay, and we have had many discussions on . . . what it means to be gay. A few years ago I didn't take a stance on whether it was right or wrong to be gay, and if anyone made a joke I would laugh. Now that I gained experience from Jack, I respect his way of life and would always support him. This point is valid because the more one experiences things with other people from different backgrounds, the more one will be able to respect and understand other people.*

Of course, we can't know everything about all cultures or develop relationships with people from all cultural groups, so it's important to develop some

general knowledge about cultural differences. For example, in this book, we have described cultural variations in both verbal and nonverbal communication. To avoid stereotyping, perhaps it is better simply to be aware of the range in thought and behavior across cultures, and not to assume that because someone belongs to a particular group, he or she will behave in a particular way.

Linguistic knowledge is another important aspect of intercultural competence. Awareness of the difficulty of learning a second language helps us appreciate the extent of the challenges that sojourners and immigrants face in their new cultural contexts. Also, knowing a second or third language expands our communication repertoire and increases our empathy for culturally different individuals. For example, as Judith struggles through her conversational Spanish class, she is reminded again of how difficult it is to accomplish ordinary things in a second language. And when she sits in class and worries that the instructor might call on her, she is reminded of the anxiety of many international students and immigrants trying to navigate a new country and language.

linguistic knowledge Knowledge of other languages besides one's native language or of the difficulty of learning a second or third language.

Attitudes Many **attitudes** contribute to intercultural communication competence, including tolerance for ambiguity, empathy, and nonjudgmentalism.

attitudes An individual's dispositions or mental sets. As a component of intercultural communication competence, attitudes include tolerance for ambiguity, empathy, and nonjudgmentalism.

Tolerance for ambiguity refers to the ease in dealing with situations in which much is unknown. Whether we are abroad or at home, interacting with people who look different from us and who behave in ways that are strange to us requires a tolerance for ambiguity. When Judith was studying Spanish in Mexico recently, she was struck by the range of attitudes of her fellow students from the United States. Some seemed very tolerant of the classroom procedures in Mexico, but others seemed to want the classes to be run as they would be in the States.

tolerance for ambiguity The ease with which an individual copes with situations in which a great deal is unknown.

Tolerance for ambiguity is one of the most difficult things to attain. As mentioned previously, people have a natural preference for predictability; uncertainty can be disquieting. Nick, an exchange student in Mexico, discusses how tolerance and language ability are particularly important—and problematic—in stressful situations:

> *I had lost my wallet in the marketplace and asked my wife to wire money to me. I couldn't figure out which Western Union location (there are many) I was supposed to go to to pick up my money. I finally went to the central post office, only to be told that my money had been delivered somewhere else—and I couldn't understand where. I was frustrated, tired and worried—and my language skills were deteriorating rapidly! Fortunately, I pulled myself together, tried to be patient, and joked with the postal workers. It took six hours to get my money, but by the end of the day, I had my money and had made some new friends at the post office!*

Empathy refers to the ability to know what it's like to "walk in another person's shoes." Empathic skills are culture bound. We cannot really view the world through another person's eyes without knowing something about his or her experiences and life. To illustrate, suppose a U.S. American and a Japanese have been introduced and are conversing. The Japanese responds to the U.S. American's first remark with a giggle. The U.S. American feels pleasurable empathic sensations and makes an impulsive comment, indicating a congenial,

empathy The capacity to "walk in another person's shoes."

POINT *of* VIEW

In his book *Last Watch of the Night,* Paul Monette points out that it is important to recognize the many forms of intolerance most of us experience as we grow up. This excerpt is from a speech he gave at the Library of Congress during National Book Week. The writer he refers to, Urvashi Vaid, is a lesbian who has written about issues of tolerance. Think about how the intolerance around you may affect you and how difficult it is sometimes to be tolerant of the many diversities you encounter.

> *Most of our families do the very best they can to bring us up whole and make us worthy citizens. But it's a very rare person who manages to arrive at adulthood without being saddled by some form of racism or sexism or homophobia. It is our task as grownups to face those prejudices in ourselves and rethink them. The absolute minimum we can get out of such a self-examination is tolerance, one for another. We gay and lesbian people believe we should be allowed to celebrate ourselves and give back to the larger culture, make our unique contributions—but if all we get is tolerance, we'll take it and build on it.*
>
> *We don't know what history is going to say even about this week, or where the gay and lesbian revolution is going to go. But we are a revolution that has come to be based very, very strongly on diversity. We have to fight like everyone else to be open in that diversity; but I love Urvashi Vaid's idea that it's not a matter of there being one of each on every board and every faculty and every organization. It's a matter of being each in one. You'll pardon my French, but it's not so hard to be politically correct. All you have to do is not be an ——.*

Source: From Paul Monette, *Last Watch of the Night* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), pp. 122–123.

accepting reaction. However, the Japanese observer now feels intensely uncomfortable. What the U.S. American doesn't realize is that the giggle may not mean that the Japanese is feeling pleasure. Japanese often giggle to indicate embarrassment and unease. In this case, the U.S. American's "empathy" is missing the mark. In this sense, empathy is the capacity to imagine oneself in another role, within the context of one's cultural identity.

Intercultural communication scholars have attempted to come up with a more culturally sensitive view of empathy. For example, Ben Broome (1991, 1993) stresses that to achieve empathy across cultural boundaries, people must forge strong relationships and strive for the creation of shared meaning in their interpersonal encounters. However, because this is difficult to achieve when people come from very different cultural backgrounds, Broome suggests that this shared meaning must be seen as both provisional and dynamic, that understanding is not an all-or-nothing proposition. In addition, cross-cultural empathy must integrate both thinking and feeling—we must try to understand

not only what others *say* (content) but also how they *feel* (empathy). Finally, he reminds us that to achieve cross-cultural empathy, we must seek to understand the context of both others' lived experiences and the specific encounters.

Magoroh Maruyama (1970), an anthropologist-philosopher, agrees that achieving cross-cultural empathy and trying to see the world exactly as the other person sees is very difficult. She describes the process as **transpection,** a postmodern phenomenon that often involves trying to learn foreign beliefs, assumptions, perspectives, and feelings in a foreign context. Transpection, then, can be achieved only with practice and requires structured experience and self-reflection.

transpection Cross-cultural empathy.

Communication scholar Milton Bennett (1998) suggests a "Platinum Rule" ("Do unto others as *they themselves* would have done unto them") instead of the Golden Rule ("Do unto others as *you* would have done unto you") (p. 213). This, of course, requires movement beyond a culture-bound sympathy or empathy for others.

Achieving **nonjudgmentalism** is much easier said than done. We might like to think that we do not judge others according to our own cultural frames of reference, but it is very difficult not to do so. One of our colleagues recalls being at a university meeting at which a group of Icelandic administrators and a group of U.S. American faculty were discussing implementing a study-abroad exchange program. The Icelandic faculty were particularly taciturn, and our colleague wanted to lighten up the meeting a little. Eventually, however, she realized that the taciturnity probably reflected different norms of behavior. She had unknowingly judged the tenor of the meeting based on her own style of communication.

nonjudgmentalism Free from evaluating according to one's own cultural frame of reference.

The **D.I.E. exercise** is helpful in developing a nonjudgmental attitude (Wendt, 1984). It involves making a distinction between description (D), interpretation (I), and evaluation (E) in the processing of information. Descriptive statements convey factual information that can be verified through the senses (e.g., "There are 25 chairs in the room" and "I am 5 feet tall"). Interpretive statements attach meaning to the description (e.g., "You must be tired"). Evaluative statements clarify how we feel about something (e.g., "When you're always tired, we can't have any fun together"). Only descriptive statements are nonjudgmental.

D.I.E. exercise A device that helps us determine if we are communicating at a descriptive, interpretive, or evaluative level. Only descriptive statements are nonjudgmental.

This exercise can help us recognize whether we are processing information on a descriptive, interpretive, or evaluative level. Confusing the different levels can lead to misunderstanding and ineffective communication. For example, if I think a student is standing too close to me, I may interpret the behavior as "This student is pushy," or I may evaluate it as "This student is pushy, and I don't like pushy students." However, if I force myself to describe the student's behavior, I may say to myself, "This student is standing 8 inches away from me, whereas most students stand farther away." This observation enables me to search for other (perhaps cultural) reasons for the behavior. The student may be worried about a grade and may be anxious to get some questions answered. Perhaps the student is used to standing closer to people than I am. Or perhaps the student really is pushy.

It is impossible to always stay at the descriptive level. But it is important to know when we are describing and when we are interpreting. Most communication is at the interpretive level. For example, have you ever been set up for a blind date and asked for a description of the person? The descriptions you might get (e.g., tall, dark, handsome, nice, kind, generous) are not really descriptions; rather, they are interpretations that reflect individual and cultural viewpoints (Wendt, 1984).

Behaviors and Skills Behaviors and skills are another component of intercultural competence. What are the most competent behaviors? Are there any universal behaviors that work well in all cultural contexts? At one level, there probably are. Communication scholar Brent D. Ruben devised a list of universal behaviors that actually includes some attitudes. These behaviors are a display of respect, interaction management, ambiguity tolerance, empathy, relational rather than task behavior, and interaction posture (Ruben, 1976, 1977; Ruben & Kealey, 1979).

Some general behaviors seem applicable to many cultural groups and contexts (Koester & Olebe, 1988; Olebe & Koester, 1989). However, these skills become problematic when we try to apply them in specific ways. For example, being respectful works well in all intercultural interactions, and many scholars identify this particular skill as important (Collier, 1988; Martin & Hammer, 1989). However, how one expresses respect behaviorally may vary from culture to culture and from context to context. For example, European Americans show respect by making direct eye contact, whereas some Native Americans show respect by avoiding eye contact. We address the importance of context more fully in the next section.

It is not enough to know how competent behaviors vary from culture to culture, one needs to be able to put that knowledge into practice by demonstrating those behaviors appropriately. Let's see how this works. In one study, Mitch Hammer and his colleagues evaluated the effectiveness of a cross-cultural training program for Japanese and U.S. American managers in a joint venture (a steel company) in Ohio. One goal was to determine if the managers' intercultural communication skills had improved significantly. The research team used a general behavioral framework of communication competence that included the following dimensions: immediacy, involvement, other orientation, interaction management, and social relaxation (Hammer, Martin, Otani, & Koyama, 1990). The two groups (Japanese managers and U.S. American managers) rated these dimensions differently. The U.S. Americans said that the most important dimension was involvement (how expressive one is in conversation), whereas the Japanese managers said that the other orientation (being tuned in to the other person) was most important. The researchers also judged how well each group of managers adapted to the other group's communication style. They videotaped the interaction and asked Japanese raters to judge the U.S. American managers on how well they adapted to the Japanese style, and vice-versa. For example, good interaction management for the Japanese meant initiating and terminating interaction and making sure everyone had a chance to talk; for U.S. Americans, it meant

POINT *of* VIEW

William Howell (1982), a renowned intercultural scholar, investigated how top CEOs made decisions. He found, to his surprise, that they did not follow the analytic process prescribed in business school courses—analysis of cost, benefits, and so on. Rather, they made decisions in a very holistic way. Howell emphasized that intercultural communication is similar, that only so much can be gained by conscious analysis, and that the highest level of communication competence requires a combination of holistic and analytic thinking. He identified four levels of intercultural communication competence: (1) unconscious incompetence, (2) conscious incompetence, (3) conscious competence, and (4) unconscious competence.

Unconscious incompetence is the "be yourself" approach, in which we are not conscious of differences and do not need to act in any particular way. Sometimes this works. However, being ourselves works best in interactions with individuals who are very similar to us. In intercultural contexts, being ourselves often means that we're not very effective and don't realize our ineptness.

At the level of **conscious incompetence,** people realize that things may not be going very well in the interaction, but they are not sure why. Most of us have experienced intercultural interactions in which we felt that something wasn't quite right but couldn't quite figure out what it was. This describes the feeling of conscious incompetence.

As instructors of intercultural communication, we teach at a conscious, intentional level. Our instruction focuses on analytic thinking and learning. This describes the level of **conscious competence.** Reaching this level is a necessary part of the process of becoming a competent communicator. Howell would say that reaching this level is necessary but not sufficient.

Unconscious competence is the level at which communication goes smoothly but is not a conscious process. You've probably heard of marathon runners "hitting the wall," or reaching the limits of their endurance. Usually, inexplicably, they continue running past this point. Communication at the unconscious competent level is like this. This level of competence is not something we can acquire by consciously trying to. It occurs when the analytic and holistic parts are functioning together. When we concentrate too hard or get too analytic, things don't always go easier.

You've probably had the experience of trying unsuccessfully to recall something, letting go of it, and then remembering it as soon as you're thinking about something else. This is what unconscious competence is—being well prepared cognitively and attitudinally, but knowing when to "let go" and rely on your holistic cognitive processing.

asking opinions of the Japanese, being patient with silence, and avoiding strong disagreement and assertive statements. As this example shows, intercultural communication competence means being able to exhibit or adapt to different kinds of behaviors, depending on the other person's or group's cultural background.

POINT *of* VIEW

In this essay, S. L. Rosen discusses the powerful stereotyping (or essentializing) of Asian people—referred to as Orientalism. By way of illustration, he analyzes a description of Japanese taken from a travelers' guidebook.

Orientalism is a total misseeing of the other through a veil of interpretations of reality which are relatively impenetrable and resistant to change. . . . Orientalism as cultural myth has been articulated through metaphors which characterize the East in ways which emphasize its strangeness and otherness . . . the Oriental person is a single image, a sweeping generalization; an essentialized image which carries with it the taint of inferiority.

To give one powerful example of this essentializing process of image formation which is entailed by Orientalism, we quote from a book entitled When Cultures Collide *by Richard D. Lewis (1982), a kind of manual for people traveling and doing business around the world to help them understand the various cultures they come in contact with. By no means the worst of its kind, Lewis' book expresses very well the way we use metaphors to trivialize another culture in a totalistic way, so as to make it easier to capture it in the network of our own understandings.*

- *Japanese children are encouraged to be completely dependent and keep a sense of interdependence throughout their lives.*
- *Everything must be placed in context in Japan.*
- *Japanese are constrained by their thought processes in a language very different from any other.*
- *They do not like meeting newcomers.*
- *They represent their group and cannot therefore pronounce on any matters without consultation and cannot initiate an exchange of views.*
- *Westerners are individuals, but the Japanese represent a company which represents Japan.*
- *As we all know, Japanese do not like to lose face.*
- *The Japanese go to incredible lengths to be polite. . . .*

This kind of Orientalism [essentializing] carries with it the implication that Asian people are much more conformist than we are, and less respecting of the dignity of individual rights, i.e., inferior. Social and cognitive psychology tells us that stereotyping is a kind of mental schema making designed to help us grasp reality—to make things more understandable and less threatening; these mental schema such as stereotypes provide us with the illusion of understanding by dividing up and categorizing the flux of experience into easily manageable cognitive maps. Orientalism has been the prevalent mode by which this cognitive need to schematize has manifested itself in apprehending Asian people.

Source: From S. L. Rosen, "Japan as Other: Orientalism and Cultural Conflict," *Intercultural Communication*, *4*, 2000; www.immi.se/intercultural.

While it is useful to acquire knowledge about how competent behaviors vary from culture to culture, as in the cross-cultural training program just described, this analytical knowledge may not be sufficient. A renowned communication scholar, William Howell, suggested that the most competent intercultural communicators are those who consciously acquire knowledge, but who also strive for an "unconscious competence" (see Point of View box).

Interpretive Perspective: Competence in Contexts

As we have stressed throughout this book, an important aspect of being a competent communicator is understanding the context in which communication occurs. Intercultural communication happens in many contexts. An interpretive perspective reminds us that a good communicator is sensitive to these contexts. (See Figure 12-1.)

Consider how definitions for competence may vary from one cultural context to another. In one research project we asked European American and Latino students to identify nonverbal behaviors that they thought would be competent in various contexts. The Latino students placed importance on approachability behaviors (e.g., smiling, laughing, pleasant facial expression) in *task* contexts. In contrast, non-Latino students reported that it was more important to exhibit these behaviors in *social* contexts (Martin, Hammer, & Bradford, 1994). These results probably reflect the importance in the Latino community of establishing personal rapport with those they work with (e.g., smiling, laughing, etc.), which sets a good "atmosphere." In contrast, non-Latino white cultural patterns often include a strong distinction between work and social relationships. Laughing and smiling—behaviors that typically communicate liking—are expected in pleasant social situations; however, one need not like a person one works with and therefore, in a task situation, it is not necessarily important to smile, laugh, etc., in order to accomplish a joint task.

Another study examined intercultural communication competence in medical contexts (Rosenberg, Richard, Lussier, & Abdool, 2006). Using the framework described earlier (motivation, attitudes, behaviors), researchers examined (through observation and in-depth interviews) the degree to which the Canadian physicians were competent in their intercultural communication with immigrant patients. They found that intercultural competence in this context involved getting to know the cultural identities of their patients, something that most physicians did not think was essential in their job. Those physicians who were most competent took time to understand cultural barriers, showed interest in patient's cultural background, realized that some medical practices might not be culturally appropriate, and identified a similarity between themselves and their patients. Their patients described their satisfaction with these physicians, saying, "She knows me; she knows my family" or "She's a woman too, so she can understand" (p. 244).

What about intercultural communication competence in mediated contexts? As we've discussed in earlier chapters, the lack of nonverbal cues (behaviors that communicate a liking and positive attitude toward the other and that establish

FIGURE 12-1 Intercultural competence in medical contexts may involve getting to know the cultural identities of patients—taking time to understand cultural barriers and showing interest in the patient's cultural background. (© *Ryan Pyle/Corbis*)

one's identity) are absent in CMC. Perhaps this requires slightly different (or additional) skills—especially involving issues of identity and language expression. First, consider how different cultures value identity expression. For example, some cultural groups place high importance on knowing the identity of a person before entering into relationships. Since much of our identity is expressed nonverbally (how we look and our conversational style), mediated conversations pose challenges. Identity is also expressed verbally, through communication style and humor (not always easily translatable across cultures and particularly difficult in cyberspace). Identity expression can also involve bragging—not viewed positively in all cultures (St. Amant, 2002). A final note about language—mediated contexts can actually facilitate communication between persons not sharing a native language, since they have more time to interpret and understand the other (the text/words are durable), as well as time to phrase their own messages (Osman & Herring, 2007). It is probably a good idea to use humor sparingly, since it is even more difficult to translate in cyberspace and is viewed in different ways in various cultures.

We have emphasized that *many* contexts can influence intercultural communication. For instance, by focusing only on the historical context, you may overlook the relational context; by emphasizing the cultural context, you may be ignoring the gender or racial contexts of the intercultural interaction; and so on. It may seem difficult to keep all of these shifting contexts in mind. However, by analyzing your own intercultural successes and failures, you will come to a better understanding of intercultural communication.

Another aspect of context is the communicator's position within a speech community. Reflect on your own social position in relation to various speech communities and contexts. For example, if you are the only woman in a largely male environment or the only person of color in an otherwise white community, you may face particular expectations or have people project motivations onto your messages. Recognizing your own relation to the speech community and the context will help you better understand intercultural communication.

Critical Perspective: Competence for Whom?

A critical perspective reminds us that individuals' competence may be constrained by the political, economic, and historical contexts. Intercultural communication scholar Mary Jane Collier (1998) reflects,

> *I have come to see that competence, a central issue in my early work, is a construct that is based on implicit privilege. . . . Relevant questions from postcolonial critics include, "Competence and acceptance from whom? Who decides the criteria? Who doesn't? Competent or acceptable on the basis of what social and historical context?" (p. 142)*

Early research on communication competence, conducted largely by white researchers and using data from white respondents, failed to take into account issues of power differentials in understanding competence. Later research, based on data from a variety of ethnic and racial groups, expanded the definition and concept of competence to include issues of stereotyping, powerlessness, and authenticity (Martin, Hecht, & Larkey, 1994). The point is that powerful groups are not likely to focus on these issues, and yet they must be taken into consideration when trying to understand the dimensions of competence. For example, African Americans report that they use stronger, more assertive, aggressive and divergent strategies not identified in previous competence studies in order to be effective in interethnic interactions (Martin, Hecht, Moore, & Larkey, 2001).

For another example, characteristics of effective communication for women in the United States have changed dramatically in the last 50 years. In the 1960s, an "effective" female communicator was expected to be rather passive (both verbally and nonverbally), indirect, and nurturing. Assertive women met with disapproval and sanctions. Today, the "effective" female is expected to behave rather differently from this. As the 21st century unfolds, there is a broader range of acceptable behaviors that define competence for females. They may be unassertive in some contexts, but they are also free, and even expected, to be more assertive in many contexts. Similarly, effective black communicators in the 1960s were expected to be nonassertive in verbal and nonverbal style. Blacks like Muhammad Ali who went against these expectations were severely sanctioned. In short, we need to understand that notions of communication competence depend on specific social, political, and historical contexts. And we need to question who is setting these standards.

Regarding the problematizing of "competence," consider the goals of intercultural interaction: Why do we want to be competent? Because we enjoy

interacting with individuals whose backgrounds are different from our own? Is it because we want to sell products, or because we want to convert people to our religion? Because we want to change the world? Or bring about social justice? It is worth examining our own and others' goals in intercultural encounters and to ask whose interests are being served.

These are important questions raised by the critical perspective that force us to rethink intercultural communication competence. Indeed, you now have the skills to push your own thinking about intercultural communication—both strengths and weaknesses—as they help and hinder your ability to communicate.

APPLYING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Now that we have taken you down the path of intercultural communication, we would like to conclude with specific suggestions for becoming better intercultural communicators. Our dialectical approach recognizes the important role of individual skills *and* contextual constraints in improving intercultural relations. The dialectical perspective also emphasizes the relational aspects of intercultural communication. Perhaps the first step in applying our knowledge to intercultural communication is to recognize the connectedness of humans and the importance of dialogue.

Entering Into Dialogue

To recognize and embrace our connectedness even to people who are different from us, we have to engage in true dialogue. A central notion of dialogue is sharing and reciprocity. Communication scholars Starosta and Chen (2005) suggest that a focus on mutual *listening*, instead of talking, forms the core of successful intercultural dialogue. How to do this? A "sharing of narratives" is one metaphor:

> *We come to the world with a master narrative that explains what things are, which ones count for what, what is good or bad about them, and we "braid" these accounts of fact and value into a somewhat coherent personal web of meaning. (p. 277)*

Starosta and Chen go on to suggest that a good intercultural listener exchanges narrative accounts to expand his or her repertoire of possibilities in explaining the world—and this interest and skill is built on a foundation of openness, curiosity, and empathy.

An Eastern model of listening is also useful here. Japanese scholar Ishii (1984) models intercultural communication as listening. In this model, the effective intercultural communicator, sensitive to the other, thinks *carefully* before speaking and delivers a message that is never threatening or condemnatory and one that appears open to multiple possible interpretations. The listener hears the message, considers it, reconsiders it, trying on different possible interpretations—trying

STUDENT VOICES

There are many small interventions we might make in everyday life to change what we take for granted. Note how this student has learned to use intercultural relationships as a part of her antiracism struggle.

I am beginning to see the long-term benefits of intercultural relationships: acquiring knowledge about the world, breaking stereotypes, and acquiring new skills. I did not have any stereotypes of Brazilians before I met Anna, but I tell all my family and friends about her, so if any of them had any prior stereotypes, they may think differently now. I have also found that when you are friends with a person of a different culture, it tends to promote some sort of peace and unity in some small way. If I am with someone of a different culture, people are less likely to make racial remarks of any kind in front of them. For example, a co-worker of mine often tells jokes about gay or black people in front of workers that are white and seemingly heterosexual. When I bring a friend into work or go out with work friends that are of a different culture (Spanish, Ukrainian, or Brazilian), he will not tell these jokes. Although my friends are not even of the culture that he makes fun of, I think he is not sure of how his jokes will go over with people he sees as being "ethnic." Regardless, the jokes stop, and that is a step toward preventing racial discrimination.

—Michele

to understand the speaker's possible intent. When the listener believes she has understood the point being made, she frames a response, again in a nonthreatening manner. You can see that ambiguity is a feature of such listening, which may seem contradictory to other guidelines for competent communication that extol being clear and concise. Perhaps this points to a dialectical view. Intercultural dialogue may have to be clear *and* somewhat ambiguous.

But how can we *really* hear the voices of those who come from cultures very different from our own—and especially those who have not been heard from? As you think about all the messages you hear every day, the most obvious voices and images are often the most privileged. To resist the tendency to focus only on the loudest, most obvious voices, we should strive for "harmonic discourse." This is discourse in which all voices "retain their individual integrity, yet combine to form a whole discourse that is orderly and congruous" (Stewart, 1997, p. 119).

Any conciliation between cultures must reclaim the notion of a voice for *all* interactants. In intercultural contexts, there are two options for those who feel left out—exit or expression. When people feel excluded, they often simply shut down, physically or mentally abandoning the conversation. When this happens, their potential contributions—to some decision, activity, or change—are lost. Obviously, the preferred alternative is to give voice to them. People's silence is broken when they feel that they can contribute, that their views are valued. And those who have historically been silenced sometimes need an invitation. Or

those who have a more reserved conversation style may need prompting, as was the case with this traveler from Finland:

> *I was on a business trip in England with some colleagues. We visited universities, where we were shown different departments and their activities. The presenters spoke volubly, and we, in accordance with Finnish speaking rules, waited for our turn in order to make comments and ask questions. However, we never got a turn; neither had we time to react to the situations.*

In sum, one way to become a more competent communicator is to work on "dialogue" skills by trying to engage in true dialogue. It's important to work on speaking and listening skills. A second step is to become interpersonal allies with people from other cultures.

Becoming Interpersonal Allies

The dialectical approach involves becoming allies with others, in working for better intergroup relations. But we need a new way to think about multiculturalism and cultural diversity—one that recognizes the complexities of communicating across cultures and that addresses power issues. Otherwise, we can get stuck within a competitive framework: If we win something, the other person or group loses, and we can *only* win if others lose. This kind of thinking can make us feel frustrated and guilty.

The goal is to find a way in which we can achieve equitable unity despite holding many different and contradictory truths, a unity based on conscious coalition, a unity of affinity and political kinship, in which we all win.

intercultural alliances Bonds between individuals or groups across cultures characterized by a shared recognition of power and the impact of history and by an orientation of affirmation.

How can we do this? We first identify what **intercultural alliances** might look like. Communication scholar Mary Jane Collier (1998) interviewed many people in intercultural friendships and identified three issues that characterize intercultural alliances. The first has to do with power and privilege: Intercultural friends recognize and try to understand how ethnic, gender, and class differences lead to power and try to manage these power issues.

In their study of college students, Chesler, Peet, and Sevig (2003) described how difficult it is to understand power issues in interracial relationships. Their findings are based on interviews with white college students. They found that most students came to college with little experience in interracial relations and were generally unaware or held negative attitudes toward racial issues, or even saw themselves as victims, as described by one young man:

> *I think white males have a hard time because we are constantly blamed for being power-holding oppressors, yet we are not given many concrete ways to change. Then we just feel guilty or rebel. (p. 227)*

Through educational and personal experiences, some did come to understand privilege, but it is often a difficult process. As we discussed in Chapter 5, it involves a phase of feeling guilty and paralyzed. As one student described it, "I was horribly liberal-guilt ridden, paralyzed, I was totally blowing every little minor interaction that I had with people of color way out of proportion. . . . I saw how hard it was for me to stop doing that and start being more productive" (p. 227).

Understanding and acknowledging one's privilege, as Collier notes, is often necessary in intercultural friendships. This student describes this acknowledgment:

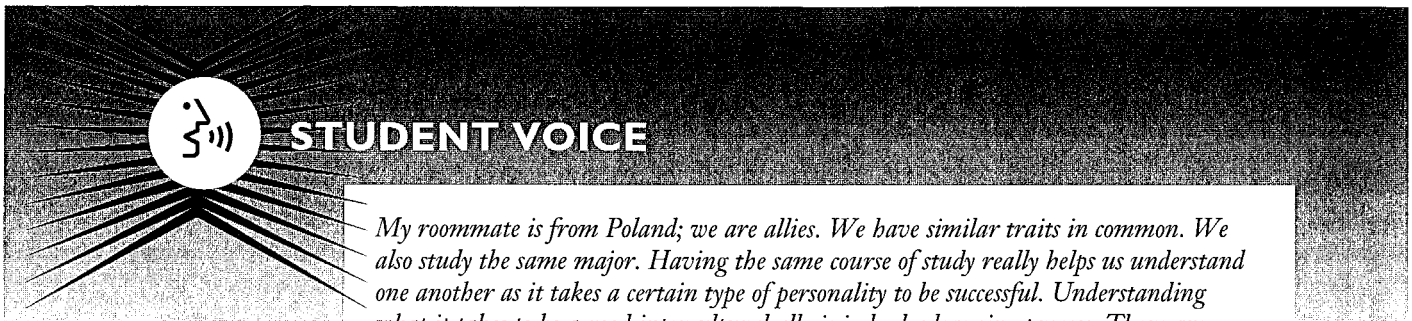
> *I learned that being white, [there are] so many privileges that I didn't even know of . . . like loans from the bank, not being stopped by the police and other things me and white kids can get away with. I had not noticed the extent to which white privilege has affected and continues to affect many aspects of my everyday life. I thought "I" had accomplished so much, but how much of where I am is due to my accumulated privilege, my family, economic status, school advantages? (Chesler et al., 2003, p. 227)*

Being on two different sides of the power issue can challenge individuals in intercultural relationships. For example, Eleanor, an African American woman, and her friend Mairead, who is white, describe how they negotiate this issue in their own relationship. Often the only African American participating in discussions of race, Eleanor says she gets tired of "educating white girls" about racism. Mairead recognizes the problem of unwittingly saying or doing racist things and "hurting my friend." This is not merely a matter of benign faux pas, but is an ongoing source of oppression for black women, something with far deeper implications than simply saying the right thing in a social situation involving equals (McCullough, 1998, p. 83). Eleanor sometimes needs to withdraw from her white friends to restore herself. For her part, Mairead recognizes that she needs to educate herself about issues of racism. And the two women realize that negotiating time-out from a friendship or time to work on personal issues alone is one aspect of intercultural friendship in a racially segregated society.

Collier's (1998) second component of intercultural alliances has to do with the impact of history: Intercultural friends recognize that people from historically powerful groups view history differently than do those who belong to less powerful groups. As we learned in Chapter 4, history often plays an important part in intercultural interactions. One of our colleagues describes how she and her friend Michael had very different views on history:

> *I was always amazed at how often my friend Michael talked about his relatives' experience during the Holocaust—even though his family wasn't directly involved. He was constantly told as he was growing up that prejudice against Jews could easily lead to another holocaust—and that he always had to be vigilant against anti-Semitism. For me, not being Jewish, I used to get impatient with him, but after learning more about the history and getting to know Michael better, I realize that this is an important part of who he is, and I've actually learned a lot from him about the experiences of a group of people that I knew little about. And I appreciate that side of him better.*

History also plays a part in black–white relationships. We're often struck by how, in discussions about race in our classes, white students go to great lengths to affirm that they aren't racist, often telling stories about friends and family members—who, unlike them, are racist. They seem to want to be absolved of past or present responsibilities where race was concerned. And whites expect



STUDENT VOICE

My roommate is from Poland; we are allies. We have similar traits in common. We also study the same major. Having the same course of study really helps us understand one another as it takes a certain type of personality to be successful. Understanding what it takes to be a good intercultural ally is indeed a learning process. There are many things that my Polish roommate does that I disagree with. But because he is from another culture I learn to understand what makes him unique and different. I have shared many meals with his extended family and even had him translate a Polish television show. I have met and enjoy being around his Polish friends.

—David

persons of color to communicate in ways that are friendly, comfortable, and absolving. In this case, true dialogue for whites involves a genuine commitment to listening, to not being defensive, and to recognizing the historical contexts that impact us all. True intercultural friends accept rather than question others' experiences, particularly when historical inequities and power issues are involved. They recognize the importance of historical power differentials and affirm others' cultural experiences even when this calls into question their own worldviews.

Collier's (1998) third component of intercultural alliances has to do with orientations of affirmation. Intercultural friends value and appreciate differences and are committed to the relationship even when they encounter difficulties and misunderstandings. For example, our student Shara comes from a cultural background that emphasizes commitment to family and family obligations. Her friend Kati has very little contact with her parents and siblings. They aren't estranged; they just aren't close. Kati would like to spend time with Shara on holidays, but Shara always spends holidays with her family, who live in another state. This issue has caused tension between the two over the years. But they each realize that these different values are important aspects of their identities. And in complex and dialectical ways, they learn from each other. Shara sometimes envies Kati for her relative freedom and lack of family obligations. But she also feels sorry for Kati that she doesn't have the kind of family support to back her up when she needs help. Similarly, Kati envies Shara's relationships with her large extended family and all the activities and help they provide. But she also sometimes feels sorry for Shara that she never seems to have any time for herself.

Building Coalitions

As we have emphasized throughout this book, many identities and contexts give meaning to who you really are. That is, your identities of gender, sexual orientation, race, region, religion, age, social class, and so on gain specific meaning and force in different contexts. Coalitions can arise from these multiple identities. There are many good examples, such as the Seeds of Peace project, which brings together Jewish and Palestinian young people to work toward peace and harmony.

Other local coalitions work to promote dialogue between blacks and whites, and between gays and straights. Another example is the post-9/11 book club coalition of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim women (see "Point of View" box on page 486).

Some contexts that arise in the future may cause you to rethink many of your identities. The rhetoric that people use to mobilize coalitions may speak to you in various ways. As you strive to build better intercultural relations, you may need to transcend some of your identities, as the workers in Hawaii did, or you may reinforce other identities. These shifting identities allow you to build coalitions among seemingly different peoples, to foster positive intercultural relationships for a better world.

Coalitions, which are built of multiple identities, are never easy to build. In the process, you may find that some of your own identities feel neglected or injured. Part of the process is the commitment to work through these emotional blows, rather than simply withdrawing to the safety of older identities. Work your way to a richer, more meaningful life by navigating between safety and stability, and change.

Social Justice and Transformation

As we near the end our journey, we would like to refer back to our ethical challenge in the first chapter—the responsibility that comes with the acquisition of intercultural knowledge and insights. As we noted then, this educational experience is not just transformative for you, the individual, but should also benefit the larger society and other cultural groups in the increasingly interdependent world.

The first step in working for social justice is acknowledging that oppression and inequities exist—as we have tried to point out, cultural differences are not just interesting and fascinating, they exist within a hierarchy in which some are privileged and set the rules for others (Allen, 2004).

Social inequities are sometimes manifested in work contexts. For example, workplace bullying—the ill treatment and hostile behavior toward people at work—has recently become a topic of interest to organizational communication scholars. Bullying behaviors range from the most subtle, even unconscious, incivilities to the most blatant, intentional emotional abuse and in some instances are targeted at others explicitly based on race/ethnicity. A recent study explored the connection between workplace bullying and racism for Asian Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and whites (Fox & Stallworth, 2005). The researchers found that while laws and norms no longer condone overtly racist behaviors, the workplace provides many opportunities for "subtle, even unconscious manifestations of racism, including neglect, incivility, humor, ostracism, inequitable treatment and other forms of 'micro-aggression' (p. 439). Their results showed that experiences with general bullying were similar (and surprisingly frequent) across the four racial/ethnic groups; 97% of the respondents had experienced some type of general bullying. Members of the three ethnic minority groups reported higher instances of bullying based on race/ethnicity than whites. Many of the reported incidents involved a supervisor or occurred with the knowledge of supervisors. The instances were often subtle, seemingly relatively innocuous

POINT *of* VIEW

In outlining specific ways in which white people can fight racism, Paul Kivel lists questions they can ask to better understand specific contexts in which they live and work.

WORKPLACE

1. *What is the gender, race and class composition in your workplace? Which groups hold which positions?*
2. *Who, by race, gender and class, has the power to make decisions about hiring, firing, wages and working conditions in your workplace? Who gets promoted and who doesn't?*
3. *Is hiring non-discriminatory? Are job openings posted and distributed? Do they attract a wide variety of applicants? Are certain groups excluded? Does the diversity of your workplace reflect the diversity of the wider community?*
4. *Are there "invisible" workers, people who cook, clean or do maintenance, for example, who are not generally noticed or paid well?*
5. *What is the racial composition of the people who actually own your workplace? Who makes money from the profits of your work?*

RELIGION

1. *What is your religious upbringing?*
2. *What did you learn about people of color in Sunday school or sermons? About Jewish people?*
3. *Was your religious community all white? Was the leadership of your religious organization all white?*

behaviors by themselves, but when delivered incessantly, the cumulative effects on the victims are of an unimaginable magnitude, leading to a general decrease in confidence in the organization and lack of confidence in the possibility of addressing or resolving the issues.

Starosta and Chen (2005) point out that intercultural listening should be followed by application. Dialogue should ultimately set things right that have been wrong. Good listening "promotes intercultural and interracial harmony, the amelioration of poverty, the introduction of justice, and mutual respect and harmony" (p. 282).

Johnson (2001) gives the following very concrete suggestions for working toward social justice and personal transformation.

1. Acknowledge that trouble exists. There are many obstacles to doing this. Many involved in oppression—those at the top—deny it, trivialize, call it something else, or blame those who are oppressed.

4. *What attitudes were expressed about people of color through discussion of missionary work, charity or social problems?*
5. *What do you know about the history of resistance to racism in your religious denomination?*

HOME AND FAMILY

1. *Were people of color and racism talked about in your childhood home? Think about particular incidents when it was. Was there tension around it? What was the general tone? Who initiated discussions and who resisted them?*
2. *Was there silence in your home on issues of racism or anti-Semitism? What did you learn from the silence?*
3. *As a child, what stories, TV shows or books influenced you the most in your attitudes about people of color? What do you carry with you from that exposure?*
4. *Talk with your partner, housemates and friends about [racial] issues. Notice the whiteness of your surroundings out loud to family and friends. This needn't be done aggressively or with great anger. You don't need to attack other people. Ask questions, notice things out loud, express your concerns and give other people room to think about and respond to what you say.*
5. *If you did a room-by-room assessment of your home today, would you find a diversity of images and items? If the answer is no, what do you and other family members lose because of that lack? How does it contribute to racial prejudice and discrimination?*

Source: From Paul Kivel, *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice*, (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 1996), pp. 182–183, 199, 222.

2. Pay attention. We have given you many suggestions for how to "pay attention," including intercultural listening. Johnson points out that there is a great deal of literature available representing many marginalized "voices," but these are rarely heard. For this reason, he suggests it is a good idea not to rely on the media for meaningful analysis of social oppression and inequalities—there is little money to be made from the stories of the powerless. While the media often give play to people of color who criticize affirmative action, or women who criticize feminism, there is little attention given to serious discussions of gender and violence, or class and race issues.
3. Do something. The more you pay attention to privilege and oppression, the more you'll see opportunities to do something.

   Make noise, be seen. Stand up, volunteer, speak out, write letters, sign petitions, show up. Every oppressive system feeds on silence.

POINT *of* VIEW

This essay gives an example of an intercultural coalition—how a post-9/11 book club brought Christian, Jewish, and Muslim women together to become interpersonal allies.

Laughter rings out in the salmon-colored living room of the parsonage at First Church in Cambridge, Mass. More than a dozen women—Christian, Jewish, and Muslim—are sharing insights garnered from "Gilead," a 2004 novel about the faith and struggles of a Christian minister in Iowa.

The easy camaraderie as they discuss their distinctive approaches to prayer reflects three years of monthly meetings of the Daughters of Abraham, as they call themselves. The book club has explored the realms of the three monotheistic faiths—and blossomed into comfortable relationships that reach into each other's daily lives. . . .

The club's origin, however, lies in the immediate anguish of Sept. 11, 2001. That night, an interfaith service hastily called by the minister at First Church (United Church of Christ) packed the sanctuary.

"The service was powerful and people were crying; there were women in head scarves sitting next to me," recalls club founder Edie Howe. "I had this strong thought of how we were all the children of Abraham, and how unnecessary and tragic it was. I thought, 'What can I do about this?'"

Her answer was to start the women's book club as a first step toward improving understanding. To ensure a joint commitment, she sought out Jews and Muslims who might share her interest and held planning discussions. A group of 18 met for the first time in September 2002 and has been meeting ever since. Though expectations vary, all share an interest in how other faiths are expressed in individual lives. . . .

Keeping a booklist, they vote on priorities and read a book a month, alternating among the three religions. Tastes range across novels, history, poetry, memoirs, and religious philosophy. During their summer hiatus in

Find little ways to withdraw supports from paths of least resistance. You can start with yourself—by not laughing at racist or heterosexist jokes, or objecting to others' jokes.

I remember the first time I met my sister's boyfriend and he made a disparaging reference to gay people, I knew I had to say something. I objected in a nice way, and we ended up talking for hours. I think he had just never thought about it very much and we're good friends to this day, although we disagree on almost every political and social issue!

Dare to make people feel uncomfortable, beginning with yourself. Ask your professors how many people of color are on the college's communication faculty. Ask why administrators at your children's schools are white men and why the teachers and secretaries are women. You might think this doesn't make much difference, but it can. . . . And discomfort is unavoidable. One student describes

2004—after the group had developed a level of trust—they read books on the history and politics of the Middle East.

"The Crusades Through Arab Eyes" was particularly informative, says Ms. Fischman, because of its non-Western vantage point.

"One book that really struck me was 'The Rock,' a historical novel by Iraqi author Kanan Makiya about the building of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem," says Ms. Minton. "The book quotes extensively from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sacred texts but doesn't give you the footnote on the page. The quotes are so similar you can't tell where they come from without looking them up in the back."

From Islamic poetry, to a mystery involving the ritual baths of Jewish tradition, to C. S. Lewis's exploration of good and evil in "The Screwtape Letters," the varied choices spur conversation on the commonalities and differences in beliefs and practices. And sometimes they reveal surprising similarities. . . .

Most club members are heartened by the way it has spilled into their lives.

"People meet for lunch, help out when members are not well, suggest a good movie—like Jewish or Iranian film festivals—and [have] dinner ahead of time," says Ms. Howe. "And they attend weddings, bar mitzvahs, celebrations at the end of Ramadan."

Wherever the book club discussions roam, they clearly have come to be meaningful for those participating. It's still going strong, Minton says, because of the quality of the relationships, the fun and laughter, and the intellectual stimulation.

"We always come out of the meeting feeling better than when we went in."

Source: From J. Lampman, "How a Post-9/11 Book Club Brought Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Women Together," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 30, 2005, pp. 14–16.

her discomfort: "I love movies, and now I point out all the instances of racist and homophobic humor in movies. My friends think I'm nuts, but they humored me, and now they're starting to point them out to me."

Actively promote change in how systems are organized around privilege. (See the "Point of View" box earlier in this chapter with Kivel's lists of questions to ask in workplace, houses of worship, home and family.)

Don't keep it to yourself. Work with other people—build interpersonal alliances and build coalitions, as discussed earlier. Join organizations dedicated to change the systems that produce privilege and oppression. Most college and university campuses have student organizations that work on issues of gender, race, and sexual orientation. A list of such organizations follows.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

National Organization for Women (NOW)

National Conference for Community and Justice
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
The Southern Poverty Law Center
The National Organization of Men against Sexism
National Urban League

There are also many opportunities on the Internet. Conhaim (2004) points out the many Web-based projects through which Internet users can participate in online dialogues, gain insights into many different global cultures, and work for social justice. See the "Internet Resources for Intercultural Interaction," section at the end of this chapter.

Forgiveness

Sometimes the cultural divide simply seems too huge. Sometimes there are grievances perpetrated by one cultural group upon another or by one individual on another that are so brutal as to make the suggestions listed above sound hollow and idealistic. What can we say to the widow of Daniel Pearl, the *Wall Street Journal* writer who was brutally murdered in Pakistan? He and his wife were known for promoting intercultural understanding in their personal and professional lives. Or to Pauline Mitchell, the mother of Fred Martinez, a Native American who was brutally murdered because he was *nadleeh* (a Native American term meaning "two spirited—with spirit of both male and female"). His mother described the horror of his death: "He'd been chased, beaten with a rock. He had been left to bleed, with a fractured skull, alone in the dark in a little canyon. . . ."

We would like to return to the notion of forgiveness we introduced in Chapter 11. Although limited and problematic, forgiveness is an option for promoting intercultural understanding and reconciliation. As we noted, forgiveness is more than a simple rite of religious correctness; it requires a deep intellectual and emotional commitment during moments of great pain. It also requires a letting go, a moving on, a true transformation of spirit.

Forgiveness has been likened to a train. People get on the train but must make various stops before forgiveness becomes a way off. The trick is not to miss your stop. And perhaps we might remember these cautionary words from Philip Yancy, an award-winning Christian author who writes about grace and forgiveness in the face of atrocities and brutality: "The only thing harder than forgiveness is the alternative" (quoted in Henderson, 1999, p. 176).

McCullough poses the question: "So if you set out to build 'the forgiving society' a society in which forgiveness flourishes and revenge is ever more infrequent what sorts of conditions and institutions would you need to put in place? And what kind of society would you end up with?" (p. 180). His answer is strongly related to the contact hypothesis that we discussed in Chapter 4. That is, leaders must construct conditions of contact among groups that lead to decategorization and recategorization, opportunities to develop intimate positive knowledge of each other, and provide superordinate goals that foster cooperation. For example, the Seeds of Peace program, started about 15 years ago,

is trying to encourage the right kinds of contact. Seeds of Peace is a summer camp where adolescents from warring groups and countries are chosen by their education ministries on the basis of their leadership potential to participate in the camp. The entire agenda is structured around activities that help campers "develop durable friendships with people from the other side, appreciation and respect for the concerns that keep the conflict going and firm conviction that a peaceful and respectful coexistence is possible" (p. 200). The goal is simple: by building up a reserve of new positive experiences, these young leaders can use them as a sort of psychological buffer to help them undo the vicious ingroup-outgroup revenge that they will return to after camp.

The Amish are another group of people that try very hard to foster a life of forgiveness and peaceful relations—persecuted to the point of extinction in Europe in the 17th century, they came to America and settled. As Michael McCullough describes it, the Amish had 400 years to prepare their response to what happened on October 2, 2006, when a gunman entered a one-room Amish schoolhouse in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, sent the young male students and adults out of the school, tied up 10 girl students and then shot and killed 5, wounded 5 more, and then shot himself. As soon as it happened, those in the community who knew the Amish well, told reporters at the scene that the Amish would find a way to forgive the killer. As Mennonite scholar Donald Kraybill, describes it, "the blood was hardly dry on the bare, board floor of the West Nickel Mines School when Amish parents sent words of forgiveness to the family of the killer who had executed their children" (Kraybill, 2006, C01).

Amish aren't the only ones; many famous proponents of peace and forgiveness—Martin Luther King, Mahatma Ghandi, Desmond Tutu—are motivated by deep religious beliefs concerning forgiveness. However, the link between religion and forgiveness is tricky. As Michael McCullough (2008) points out, religion can motivate forgiveness (as described earlier), but also revenge. The great monotheistic religions of the world (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) have perpetrated great violence on others in the name of religion. While many religious people say they disapprove of revenge in theory, there have been many studies that show their true feelings. A 2004 study showed that conservative U.S. Americans with strong religious beliefs were nearly 3 times more likely (than Americans with lower religiousity) to believe that Muslim Americans' movement should be monitored by the government, 50% more likely to think that the U.S. should be able to detain terrorists indefinitely and 50% more likely to think that Islam encourages violence more than other religions. . . . Christian beliefs seem to motivate people to be tough not only on terrorists but also on the millions of American Muslims who've done absolutely nothing wrong (Nisbet & Shanahan, 2004). In another study, people who made frequent donations to their churches (a measure of devoutness) administered higher levels of shock to their provokers than did the infrequent donors, even when statistically controlling for age, gender, and other measures of religious behavior (Greer, Berman, Varan, Bobrycki, & Watson, 2005).

Perhaps a useful way to look at the role of religions is to see them as strong viable forces—capable of great good and also violence. "Religions are here for the

POINT *of* VIEW

In this essay, the writer addresses the complexities of the notion of forgiveness. He begins the essay talking about the delayed justice in the case of the 1958 bombing of the black church in Birmingham, Alabama, that killed four little girls. Roy Wilkins, a longtime civil rights advocate, has always been a firm believer in the merits of forgiveness.

> *But events like the bombing in Birmingham help Mr. Wilkins recognize the limitations of forgiveness. In some cases, people can free their hearts of hatred without forgiving. Birmingham, he said, might be one of those cases. "I really don't think it is necessary to forgive every act," he said. "Where forgiveness applies to the Birmingham situation is what has happened in that city, and this is that blacks, by and large, have entered in the life of the city and they don't hold Bull Connor against white people who live in the city." A more personal forgiveness is made difficult in Birmingham because the killers have not sought it; Mr. Cherry denied his guilt even after the verdict. "There has to be some show of respect or remorse," said Mr. Jones, the prosecutor. "For there to be true forgiveness, it has to come from both sides."*
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> *Yet that did not happen, at least at first, in the case of Amy Biehl, a Fulbright scholar from Southern California who was stoned and stabbed to death in South Africa in 1993. Her killing stunned that country, but more shocking for many people was the forgiving response of her parents, Peter J. and Linda Biehl.*
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> *The Biehls quit their jobs to work full time on racial reconciliation. They testified in favor of political amnesty for the killers. They even offered two of them jobs. "To us it is liberating to forgive," Mr. Biehl, who died on March 31, once said.*
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> *At the time, Biehl's crusade seemed preposterous, almost beyond human. But that view changed in the past decade as forgiveness evolved into a more*

foreseeable future and religious groups are going to keep doing exactly what they please, largely shaped by their perceptions of their self-interest. . . . We can either ignore religion's power to shape forgiveness and revenge to our peril or else we can try to understand that power and work with it. . . . We shouldn't let misplaced optimism cause us to expect anything more, but we shouldn't let unwarranted pessimism cause us to strive for anything less" (McCullough, 2008, p. 223).

The future of our world may well rest on our ability to control revenge and promote forgiveness. As we suggested in Chapter 11, scholar McCullough is convinced that we humans have an instinct for both, but is optimistic because we are an adaptive species. We have proved that we can adapt quickly to respond to challenges in the environment; we have also shown that we can learn to do the right thing—to learn where and when to seek revenge and when to forgive—by watching those who demonstrate forgiveness—leaders, teachers, parents—and finally we are cooperative creatures and "we've already organized into very large groups called nation-states, perhaps the next evolutionary transition will result

mainstream tool of holistic healing, conflict resolution and self-help. . . . The Rev. Michael Lapsley, who was an anti-apartheid activist, talked about Sept. 11 forgiveness on a recent visit to New York. He is familiar with the notion of the facelessness of some evildoers—when he was a chaplain for the African National Congress he lost an eye and both hands after he opened an anonymous letter bomb in 1990.

Forgiveness, Father Lapsley says, is a matter of choice, and since the American government ultimately responded militarily to the terror attacks, many Americans never examined any alternative. Yet because so many worldwide shared in America's horror and grief over Sept. 11, he explained, "Your pain has been acknowledged. That gives you freedom to take a position away from war and hatred and revenge."

But what about hunting down the perpetrators? What about justice?

In June, the Rev. Myrna Bethke, a member of the September Eleventh Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, will travel to Kabul with an interfaith delegation. Ms. Bethke, a Methodist minister in Freehold, N.J., had a brother who was killed at the World Trade Center.

She says she has forgiven his killers, but makes a distinction between retaliation, which she is against, and consequences, which she is for. She is going to Kabul in part to help remind herself that the people there have names and faces—making it harder to want to retaliate against them.

Forgiving her brother's killing, she says, released her from a tremendous burden. "You are free to live again," Ms. Bethke said.

Source: From Dean Murphy, "Beyond Justice: The Eternal Struggle to Forgive," *New York Times*, May 26, 2002, Section 4, p. 1.

in a lasting bond of cooperation among the world's nations" (p. 234). We must believe that it is possible "as the bad people of the world get angrier, more organized and better funded, we really do have to worry about what the desire for revenge might be capable of doing to our world" (p. 225).

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

We live in a rapidly changing environment with increasing diversity both domestically and internationally. We see these changes occurring in economic issues, political issues, historical issues, and ideological issues. For example, the rapid rise of the European Union, both as a political entity and in terms of its currency—the euro against a falling U.S. dollar—have the potential to change rapidly the way U.S. Americans live. If other nations begin to shift their investments from the United States to other nations, the "dollar could lose much more value on international markets; foreign investors could pull out of American

markets, sending stock market indexes steeply downward; the U.S. government could be forced to raise taxes to make up for the bonds it can no longer sell around the world. If all that happened, Americans would wake up to the revolution in Europe in the most painful way" (Reid, 2004, p. 243).

Not only foreign investors but U.S. Americans are also beginning to look overseas for their investments. Largely because "foreign funds more than doubled the returns of their domestic counterparts last year, American investors poured more new money into foreign stock funds in 2005—an estimated $149 billion—than in the previous four years combined. In fact, they put more new money to work in foreign funds than they did in domestic stock portfolios, which usually garner the bulk of investor dollars" (Lim, 2006, p. 23). These economic changes point to a more global economy, but they also point to the decreasing ability of U.S. Americans to continue to live in an isolated, monolingual world. The increasing demands of the new world order necessitate understanding cultures around the world, along with very different ways of understanding this new world.

In military terms, the United States is embarking on more and more overseas operations. Although not the primary reason for their assignments overseas, U.S. soldiers can play important roles in foreign relations as cultural ambassadors. Culturally insensitive soldiers can also wreak havoc on the image of the United States abroad, as happened in Afghanistan when U.S. soldiers used burnt corpses as propaganda, leading to an extremely negative reaction from the Islamic world. As part of this effort in enhancing intercultural contact, "American forces receive some cultural sensitivity training before arriving here, but with new troops rotating through every 7 to 12 months, the instruction can be spotty and inconsistent" (Schmitt, 2006, p. 7). Thus, the military has distributed laminated wallet-sized cultural guides to help the soldiers avoid negative encounters (see "Point of View" box on page 494).

In political terms, the rise of anti-Americanism is an increasing challenge for U.S. Americans. Although many U.S. Americans became aware of the French anti-Americanism in the wake of their disagreement over the invasion of Iraq, anti-Americanism is a worldwide phenomenon and certainly not a recent perspective (Ross & Ross, 2004). U.S. Americans may focus on the French, but rising anti-Americanism in Latin America, particularly Venezuela, and other areas around the world should not be overlooked. Whether or not you agree with the reasons for anti-Americanism—and these reasons are not the same around the world—you should know the reasons that people may feel this way. Without understanding the reasons for anti-American feelings, it is difficult to engage in meaningful intercultural dialogue.

The lack of understanding of other cultures is often felt by those who think that U.S. Americans should be more sympathetic to their situation. The 2005 riots in France, for example, mirror the riots in Los Angeles in 1992. Both were sparked by groups who felt disenfranchised from the larger society, although many more people were killed in the Los Angeles riots. One French writer notes, "We French expected a little more empathy considering the 1992 Los Angeles riots, when the authorities responded in force, and the city experienced curfews, 8,000 arrests, and scores of deaths" (Maier, 2006, p. 15).