

An Introduction for the Teacher

A story is told of six blind men and an elephant. The blind men asked, “What is the elephant like?” and they began to touch its body. One of them said, “It is like a pillar.” This blind man had only touched its leg. Another man said, “The elephant is like a husking basket.” This person had only touched its ears. Similarly, he who touched its trunk or its belly talked of it differently. In the same way, culture must be experienced from different perspectives to gain a richer, deeper understanding of that culture. This textbook provides a myriad of authentic perspectives from U.S. Americans on their own culture.

Overview

How do we as teachers teach U.S. American culture to our students? What specifically should we teach about culture? How can we go beyond teaching history, literature, and geography to helping our students truly begin to understand U.S. Americans as they interact with them on a daily basis? Specifically, how can we teach cultural values to our students? This book was written with these questions in mind.

Why are cultural values so important to teach? As teachers, we know that culture and language are intertwined. Too often, though, when we teach about U.S. American culture, we tend to teach the proverbial “tip of the cultural iceberg”—holidays, music, food, history, geography, pop culture, and so on. We also know that we need to teach what is beneath that proverbial tip—the part of U.S. American culture that is often difficult for our students to see and understand. This textbook addresses the parts of U.S. American culture that are hard to see and teach—the beliefs and values of the American people. Featured in this textbook are the stories of 28 Americans from all over the United States who represent a wide variety of cultures, races, ages, and backgrounds. The book includes stories from African Americans, Asian Americans, Caucasian Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, an Arab American, and Americans of mixed races and ethnicities. These Americans represent men and women, younger and older people, rural and urban lifestyles. Their personal stories have not been simplified in any way; each person’s story is told in his or her own words. It’s as if students will have visits from 28 different Americans, each sharing something that is important to them culturally and,

in so doing, providing a more holistic view of U.S. American culture. This textbook is one of the first to offer this unique way in which to address these deeper culturally conditioned values—through authentic voices representing the rich diversity within the United States.

ESL students' in-depth questions about U.S. American culture, which no cultural textbook to date seemed to address, inspired this textbook. For example, my students would ask questions about what their cultural textbook really meant in terms of the daily lives of U.S. Americans, if it were possible to meet U.S. Americans who could actually talk about what was important to them, and what life was like for them growing up. My students really wanted to know more about U.S. Americans' perspectives on deeper issues such as diversity in the United States, relations among different races, how U.S. Americans felt about immigrants in their communities, how aspects of U.S. American culture had changed over time, and why U.S. Americans behaved in certain ways (for example, why do some U.S. Americans not take care of their older parents, why do many young U.S. Americans leave home at age 18, and so on). This textbook grew out of these conversations and is one response to students' desire to learn more about U.S. American culture.

Student feedback was invaluable in the development of this textbook. One of the authors met with students in several different focus groups during the development of this textbook, and possible ideas and formats were discussed. Through these discussions, as well as in one-on-one conversations with students, we found that students wanted to understand more about what U.S. Americans value so that they could better understand U.S. Americans' behaviors and, ultimately, be more successful in their interactions with U.S. Americans in their communities. They wanted to know and understand more about U.S. Americans' experiences, especially those from different parts of the United States. Since these students are based in North Carolina, they were quite curious about what Americans are like in different regions of the United States and not just those living in their community. The students wanted to go beyond what they learned at an abstract level in cultural textbooks and were interested in practical examples of how U.S. cultural values impact the daily lives of average U.S. Americans, not just those they read about in books, magazines, and newspapers.

It is important to point out that because U.S. Americans come from many different ethnic backgrounds and because the country is so big, it is not possible to define an "average American" or to assume that any particular cultural value is shared by all Americans. We do not want students to generalize or stereotype what an "average American" believes. Rather, by including stories from a diverse group of Americans representing a variety of ethnic groups, ages, and geographic regions of the country, we hope to broaden our students' perspectives. The 28 personal stories featured in this textbook have been selected to illustrate both the common cultural values and the individual diversity of U.S. Americans.

A note about terminology: Throughout this book, you will often see the term *U.S. American culture*. This is an intentional reference to strive to be more culturally sensitive since ESL students are often quick to point out that *American culture* can also include all cultures in South, Central, and North America. Nonetheless, in this book, *American* and *U.S. American* are used interchangeably, and any references to *American* culture refer to the culture of the United States. Realizing that there is much diversity within American culture as well, this textbook focuses on the major patterns found within U.S. American culture.

Purpose and Audience

This textbook serves to introduce students to the deeper levels of American culture and provides a stimulating springboard for further discussions among students regarding culture and understanding others, beyond history or holidays. The main purpose of this textbook is to help students gain a deeper understanding of U.S. Americans beyond what they may see portrayed on TV or in movies—in order to be more effective and appropriate in their interactions with Americans. This textbook will ultimately help students hone their intercultural competence (discussed in more detail on pages xxii–xxix).

At the core of the book are 28 authentic stories told by Americans from around the United States. Each story was selected in an attempt to illustrate *patterns* found in U.S. American culture. The stories provide examples of cultural values and personal beliefs that may be important not just to the author of the story but also to many U.S. Americans throughout the United States, although certainly not to all U.S. Americans, given the diversity found in this culture. In some cases, broad cultural patterns are repeated in different stories from Americans with different backgrounds who are living in different parts of the United States. Together, these stories create a more holistic and in-depth understanding of U.S. American culture and Americans.

Writing and speaking activities related to each story have been designed to help students explore these underlying values and beliefs, those in their own cultures and in U.S. American culture. Specifically, activities have been developed at the end of each story to encourage students to engage with U.S. Americans in their communities so that they can continue their cultural learning in the community in which they live, as well as to practice speaking English with fluent English speakers. Through these readings and activities, it is our hope that students will gain deeper insights into the underlying cultural values of U.S. Americans and, in so doing, will begin to better understand the contexts of Americans' behavior and actions. Ultimately, such understanding will hopefully ease students' transition of living in the United States.

This textbook is intended primarily for adult non-native speakers of English at the high-intermediate to advanced level who are living in the United States, although this could also be adapted to those students learning English in other countries. It could also be used by college students who desire to learn more about U.S. American culture. While this is primarily a textbook that teaches students about culture, it is also designed to help improve students' reading, writing, and speaking skills, and to expand their vocabularies.

Organization and Content

We have divided the material in this textbook into fifteen units. The first two units introduce students to the overall diversity (Unit 1) and underlying cultural values (Unit 2) of the United States. The remaining thirteen units in the textbook are then organized by geographic region, *solely to show that stories come from many parts of the United States, and not just one location within the country*. Most units contain two stories; this allows students to compare and contrast the experiences of two different Americans who are from the same general region, in addition to comparing the experiences of Americans from different regions. Many different factors can be used to identify and define “regions” within a country. It is very important to explain to readers that regions are created by people to more easily define places that share similar characteristics but that, as human constructions, regions do not have clearly defined boundaries and that the actual geographic boundaries of a region are open to debate.

It is also important to let students know that, even though the material is organized geographically by region, the stories contained within each unit represent cultural patterns *found throughout the United States and not just in that particular region*. In fact, some cultural values are mentioned numerous times in stories throughout the book, allowing students to see that a particular cultural pattern is shared by a variety of U.S. Americans who live in different regions of the country. However, remind students that not all Americans uphold a particular cultural value, whether they are from the same geographic region or from different parts of the United States.

The 28 stories in this textbook were selected because they represent a *pattern* of cultural values found throughout the United States (see section Understanding U.S. American Values on pages xxii–xxiv for more information on the core values identified in this book). This means that, in general, U.S. Americans may tend to have the values illustrated by the stories in this book. However, it is important for you as the teacher to help your students understand that while these stories illustrate common cultural values, students may meet U.S. Americans who do not share one or more of these values. To do this, you may want to discuss the difference between generalizations and stereotypes—

noting that generalizations are about patterns found in a culture but they will not apply to everyone in that culture. Generalizations serve as guidelines only. Stereotypes, on the other hand, are statements often based on limited data that are applied to everyone from that culture. Please emphasize with your students how important it is to get to know each person and to understand his or her background, without applying stereotypes or cultural information that may not be true for that individual. Help your students recognize that all persons have been culturally conditioned to some extent and that their behaviors may reflect some of this cultural conditioning. Students will have the opportunity to explore the diversity in cultural values further through the Real Life Application activities (see pages xxi–xxii for a description of these activities).

In reading these personal stories, direct students to think about how the writers have been influenced by their cultural upbringing, with the majority of Americans having values that are tied to their heritages but also to living in this country, even if they were born in another country. Americans are an amalgamation of different cultural influences. In trying to understand Americans and what they value, it's important to understand the extent of cultural conditioning within U.S. American culture, especially given the diversity of the United States. So what are those patterns of cultural conditioning that make U.S. Americans “American”? This textbook is designed to help your students understand some of the patterns of that cultural conditioning, reflected through authentic American voices.

Within each unit and each story, the Presentation-Practice-Use approach is used. The Presentation occurs through the cultural notes, stories, comprehension questions, and vocabulary activities; the Practice occurs through the writing/speaking questions; and the Use occurs through the real life applications.

- Each story begins with **pre-reading activities**, including questions to focus the students on the personal story. Questions usually address the geographic location of the writer (to give students the context of location), as well as the cultural issues that will be raised in the story. A vocabulary prediction activity familiarizes students with a few key vocabulary words in the story and encourages them to predict the meaning of the words. (These words may not be common in other academic contexts, but they are important for understanding the story.) Students should look up actual definitions and write them in the book. As the teacher, you may even want to discuss a couple of these words further if you feel it would be helpful in increasing students' comprehension of the story. (Some of the stories have footnotes that you may need to explain to help your students understand the story more fully as they read it.)
- A **cultural note** introduces the student to the reading and to the underlying cultural value(s) addressed in the personal story. This cultural element is further elaborated later in the unit in a section called Culture

Application, which is designed to encourage students to think about what the cultural value means in terms of interacting with U.S. Americans and understanding U.S. American culture better.

- A **reading (story)** in authentic English is the featured highlight of each unit (most units contain two stories) and is the basis on which the other materials and activities for each unit are built. The stories vary in degree of difficulty, with a few of the easier ones toward the beginning of the text and the most complex story, both context-wise and vocabulary-wise, concluding the text in Unit 15. Note: Some readings can and do illustrate more than one cultural pattern. However, for the purposes of this text, just one or two cultural patterns are emphasized for each reading.
- **Cultural application** notes follow each story and briefly highlight what students should “take away” culturally from the story in regard to interacting successfully with U.S. Americans. Note: These application notes are broad generalizations so be sure to stress with students that they will not apply in all of their interactions with U.S. Americans. Additionally, these cultural applications aren’t meant to imply that students need to use these to assimilate but are provided to help students understand U.S. American behavior better and to help them be more successful in their interactions.
- **Comprehension questions** (and, in some cases, also true/false questions) reinforce reading skills, including fact finding, synthesizing knowledge, and overall understanding of the reading passage.
- **Vocabulary exercises** are included to help students understand new vocabulary words in the story. These vocabulary words can be pre-taught at the beginning of the story and then used as review after reading the story. These words were selected based on several factors, including frequency use in the text, consultation of high-intermediate/ advanced vocabulary lists, and actual experiences with students regarding problem words. Specifically, the pre-teaching contains words that may aid in understanding the reading but are not necessarily high-frequency words in academic text. The vocabulary activity following the reading, however, focuses on high-frequency words, more commonly used words, or commonly used words with not so commonly used definitions for those words. The entire vocabulary part is based on Celce-Murcia (1991)’s 3 C’s approach to addressing vocabulary: (1) **conveying** meaning, which is done in the pre-teaching exercise; (2) **checking** understanding, which is done in the vocabulary exercises at the end of each story; and (3) **consolidation**, which involves students actually using the new vocabulary words. This is done by asking students to write original sentences at the end of each vocabulary exercise. This last part is very important

since it forces students to do more than just memorize or understand definitions and, instead, facilitates students' actual usage of the vocabulary words. Teachers are also encouraged to develop other activities for their students to consolidate vocabulary usage, including writing stories, dialogues, and so on. These vocabulary words can also be used to reinforce spelling through spelling tests or spelling bees. Encourage students to keep a vocabulary notebook and list any new vocabulary learned through the stories.

- The combined **writing and speaking activities** focus on the cultural aspects of the story and allow students to reflect further on what they experience in U.S. American culture as well as from their own culture and cultural conditioning. These activities also provide an opportunity for students to practice what they will do in their conversations with U.S. Americans in the Real Life Applications that follow. Teachers are encouraged to use the questions for writing practice first for the following reason: speaking activities that include a preparation component “promote more successful student output” (Folse, 2006, p. 49). By having students think about the questions and write answers first, they are able to produce more complex language. That being said, it is not mandatory or desired for your students to always write their answers before discussing them in pairs or small groups. Depending on the needs of your students, they may not need such preparation before speaking but might benefit from discussing the questions first before responding in writing.
- The final activity for each authentic story is the **Real Life Application** in the community, which takes students from practicing in the classroom to using this information in the real world. Each Real Life Application includes a directed interaction with U.S. Americans in the community, often asking Americans questions similar to those the students practiced in class. (This is intentional so that, in most cases, students will have practiced the questions first in class before going to ask those questions to native English speakers.) Encourage students to write the responses from U.S. Americans they talk to and then to report back in class. These responses could possibly be written in a “culture journal” specific to this activity. Reporting on their interactions will promote further discussion in class and a deeper understanding of U.S. culture as students gain information and insights from these interactions. (Note that you will need to help provide suggestions as to how your students can connect with Americans in the community, such as through community clubs, sports clubs, church groups, or reading groups.) Other Real Life Applications for each story include opportunities for observation in the community, use of authentic materials in the community, or further research that will reinforce and

expand students' cultural understanding. Some real life activities may seem similar from unit to unit, which is partly intentional so that students can become comfortable with engaging in those activities, some of which have slightly different foci, depending on the unit and cultural themes of the stories.

Engagement with U.S. Americans in the community is a vital part of this textbook in that it not only provides students with real life practice, but it gives students the opportunity to interact with U.S. Americans in meaningful ways in order to build relationships, practice their English, and gain deeper insights into U.S. American culture. Sharing and debriefing with your students regarding these Real Life Applications can become a rich part of the course. These Real Life Applications are a unique feature of this textbook .

- **End-of-Unit Activities** encourage students to think about the cultural insights they have gained through the stories and activities and to think in terms of how they will use this information in their daily interactions. One of those activities is to record their insights in a Notes chart found in the last unit of this textbook (see pages 202–10). It's very important that students complete this chart as they work through the textbook so that their cultural notes can easily be found in one location for the final reflection activities, which need to be completed in the concluding unit of the textbook.
- Add **listening activities** by reading the stories out loud instead of asking students to read them. Other activities can be added to enhance each chapter, such as focusing on key grammar elements that may emerge in the various stories or encouraging your students to role-play various situations found in the stories as a way for them to not only practice their English but to have them more fully experience the stories.

It is important to cover as many units, or even partial units, as possible in your course. We have found that students benefit from exposure to all of the units in this textbook. Working through these units will help your students develop a more comprehensive understanding of the deeper layers of U.S. American culture.

Understanding U.S. American Values

Many intercultural scholars have researched and written about cultural values in the United States. This textbook utilizes the work of Robert Kohls, who identified thirteen cultural values that summarized patterns found within U.S. American culture (see Table 1). The stories that appear in this textbook were selected to help illustrate these core values. Storti's work (2004) on American Values, *Americans at Work: A Guide to the Can-Do People*, was also

consulted. You may want to reflect on how these values are, or are not, exhibited in the behaviors of the U.S. Americans whose stories appear in this book.

Some Values of U.S. Americans (Kohls, 2001, 2004)

1. **Personal Control over the Environment:** People can/should control nature, their own environment, and their own futures. *Result:* Energetic, goal-oriented society.
2. **Change/Mobility:** Change is good/positive; change represents progress, improvement, growth. New is better. *Result:* Transient society—geographically, economically, and socially.
3. **Control of Time:** Time is valuable and limited. *Result:* Efficiency and progress at the expense of relationships
4. **Equality/Egalitarianism:** All people have equal opportunities; basic worth is not assigned to individuals due to gender, birth, race, age, or status. *Result:* Status is not acknowledged.
5. **Individualism, Independence, and Privacy:** People are viewed as individuals (not group members) who have their own needs and who need time to be alone. The success of the individual is most important. *Result:* U.S. Americans may be viewed as self-centered, isolated, and lonely.
6. **Self-Help:** Americans take pride in own accomplishments. *Result:* Respect is given for achievements.
7. **Competition/Free Enterprise:** Competition brings out the best, and free enterprise produces the most progress. *Result:* Less emphasis on cooperation, except in some settings (i.e., work teams).
8. **Future-Oriented/Optimism:** Regardless of past or present, future will be better/happier. *Result:* Constantly looking ahead; little value on past or traditions.
9. **Action- and Work-Oriented:** Work is morally right; identity is defined by work. *Results:* More emphasis on “doing” than on “being.” Time is wasted if nothing is accomplished or done.
10. **Informality:** Formality is a show of arrogance and superiority. *Result:* Casual attitudes between people; use of first names is common.
11. **Directness, Openness, Honesty:** Directness is usually not a sign of rudeness or disrespect but rather openness and efficiency. Americans may become annoyed when someone is not direct and may view indirectness as a form of dishonesty. *Result:* U.S. Americans tend to tell the truth and seemingly disregard a person’s feelings without regard to someone else saving “face/honor.” U.S. Americans don’t want you to say anything just to please them.

12. **Practicality/Efficiency:** Most important consideration in decision-making. *Result:* Americans may place less emphasis on emotional or sensual decisions.
13. **Materialism:** Accumulation of material goods seen as rewards of hard work. *Result:* Americans are viewed as caring more for things than for people or relationships.

Kohls' (2001, 2004) thirteen values represent *patterns* found within U.S. American culture, but individuals may not necessarily fit those existing patterns. Thus, while the values highlighted in this textbook can be used as a guide for understanding behavior, it remains imperative for students to understand that not all U.S. Americans fit the patterns illustrated by the values identified by Kohls. It is also important to help your students understand that culture is much more complex than the values represented in this textbook—this is just a start in beginning to understand U.S. American culture and the behaviors students may encounter in daily interactions. It is also helpful to ask your students to reflect on the values found in other cultures (see Table 1) and to note how they differ from those in the U.S. Make sure students understand that values are not right or wrong, just different.

Table 1. Kohls' Values	
U.S. Majority Values	Values of Other Cultures
Personal Control over the Environment	Fate
Change	Tradition
Time and Its Control	Human Interaction
Equality	Hierarchy/Rank/Status
Individualism/Privacy	Group's Welfare
Self-Help	Birthright Inheritance
Competition	Cooperation
Future Orientation	Past Orientation
Action/Work Orientation	"Being" Orientation
Informality	Formality
Directness/Openness/Honesty	Indirectness/Ritual/"Face"
Practicality/Efficiency	Idealism
Materialism/Acquisitiveness	Spiritualism/Detachment

Understanding Theoretical Cultural Frameworks

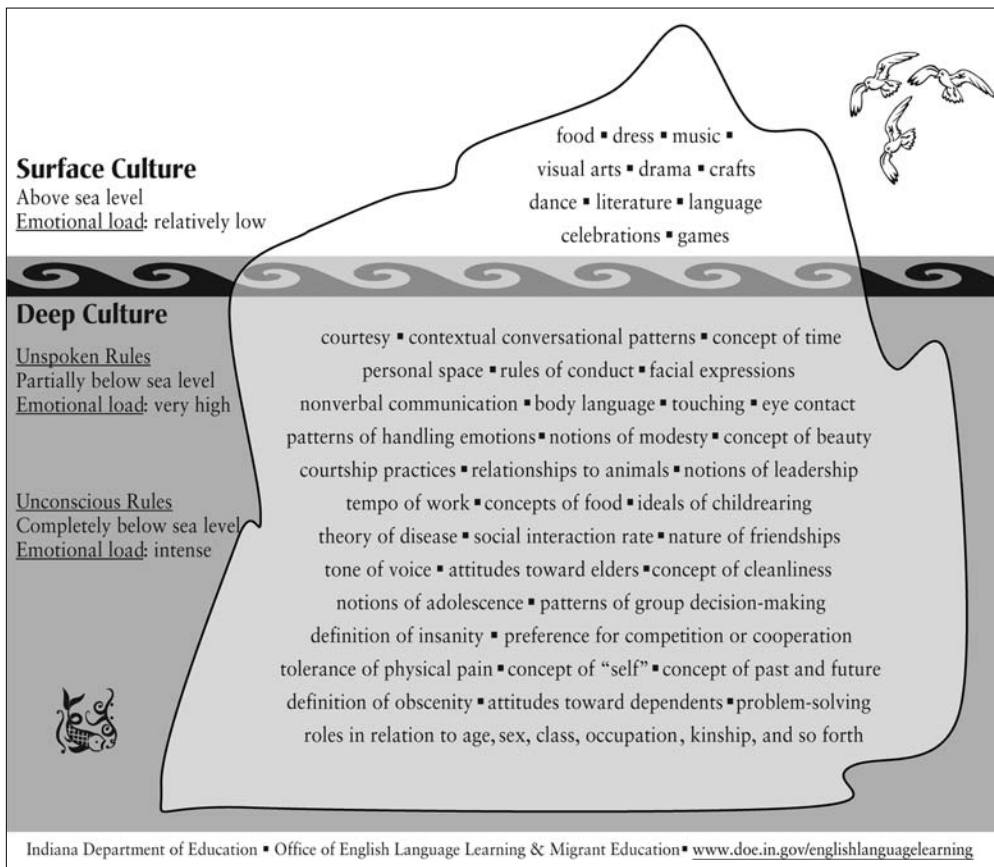
Various theoretical cultural frameworks have been developed, such as ones by Geert Hofstede, with his focus on four dimensions of culture, or Edward Hall's work (1990) on aspects of cross-cultural communication. As Hofstede (1991) noted, "the main cultural differences among nations lie in values" (p. 236). Thus, understanding these values becomes crucial in understanding

others. In teaching the deeper elements of U.S. American culture, it is helpful to understand the general concept of “culture” and the various cultural frameworks that shape an individual’s values, beliefs, and behaviors.

Culture has been defined in a variety of ways, from “software of the mind” (Hofstede 1991) to a “blueprint for interactions” (Magala 2005) to “patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired . . . of human groups” (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 181) to simply “the shared way of life of a group of people” (Berry, 2004, p. 167). Culture is an ever changing, complex phenomenon that shapes the lens through which individuals view the world around them and influences individuals’ assumptions, attitudes, and behaviors. According to DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004), “the culture in which individuals are raised is the most important determinant of how they view and interpret the world” (p. 13).

What is important to remember in relation to this textbook is that culture goes beyond what is known as *objective* culture (history, literature, music and so on) to include *subjective* culture (Triandis, 1994), which comprises the less tangible aspects of culture such as beliefs, values, attitudes, and meanings. These aspects ultimately influence and condition the behaviors that are experienced in daily interactions. Thus, a visual depiction of a definition of culture is known as the iceberg concept of culture (see Figure 1). In this visual depiction,

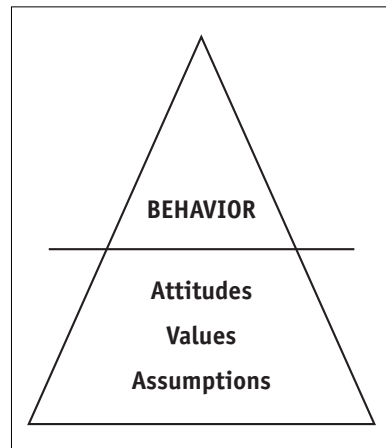
Figure 1. The Iceberg Concept of Culture



culture includes not only what is concrete and visible in a culture but also what is not visible. This textbook focuses on the less visible aspects of culture, namely underlying cultural values that influence behavior. Values here are defined as shared assumptions about what is important to a group of people, which “fundamentally influence the behavior of individuals” in that group (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2004, p. 18).

There are three levels of human behavior—the personal, cultural, and universal levels. Behavior at the personal level is what makes us all unique as individuals. Behavior at the cultural level is how we as individuals have been culturally conditioned by the group(s) to which we belong to behave in socially acceptable ways in that particular cultural group. Behavior at the universal level encompasses behaviors that all humans may have in common. This textbook focuses on understanding behavior that is culturally conditioned. As illustrated by this behavior pyramid (see Figure 2), if we want to understand behavior in other cultures (which is the visible part of the interaction), it is important to understand the assumptions, values, and attitudes that lie beneath that behavior. This textbook thus helps students explore some underlying cultural values, as a tool for understanding the behaviors that they encounter in their daily interactions.

Figure 2. Behavior Pyramid

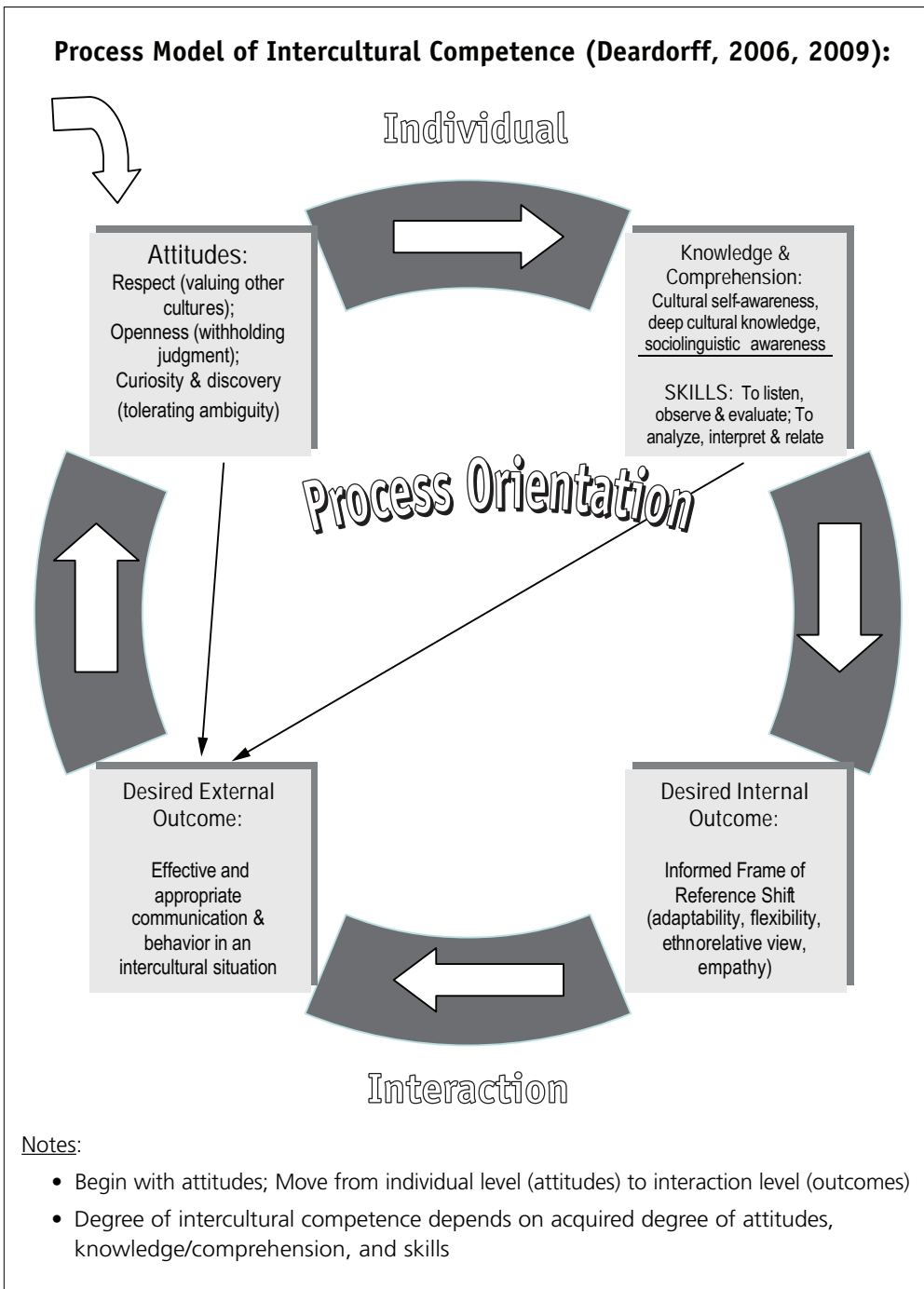


Developing Intercultural Competence

Ultimately, what does this understanding of cultural values lead to? By understanding values in another culture, students can enhance their own intercultural competence—their effective and appropriate behavior and communication with others. What do we mean by intercultural competence? The intercultural competence framework in Figure 3 (Deardorff, 2006, 2009) was used as one of the theoretical frameworks in developing this textbook.

In this model, there are three main components of intercultural competence (attitudes, knowledge, and skills) that lead to the internal and external outcomes that enable us to be more successful in our intercultural interactions. A key aspect of the knowledge component is culture-specific knowledge—which is where the underlying cultural values play an essential role. It’s not enough to just know the language or customs or facts about another culture; rather, these values influence the behavior we encounter. Another key aspect in the knowledge component of intercultural competence is “cultural self-awareness,” which has also guided the development of this textbook. The activities associated with each story intentionally help students reflect on their own cultures in an effort to help them gain a greater cultural self-awareness and to

Figure 3. Intercultural Competence Model



From “The Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization at Institutions of Higher Education in the United States” by Dr. K. Deardorff in *Journal of Studies in International Education*, Fall 2006, 10, p. 241–266 and in *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, 2009 (Thousand Oaks: Sage).

process the cultural learning that they are experiencing in their daily living experience in this country.

Crucial to intercultural competence development is reflection. A starting point for understanding any culture is with one's own culture. Thus, teachers are strongly encouraged to use this text as a reflective tool for their students in order to enhance students' intercultural competence development. To facilitate such reflection, space has been provided at the end of each unit to allow students to reflect on the readings, on what these readings helped them understand about their own cultures, and on the implications for understanding behaviors. Journaling is also an excellent way to engage in this reflective learning, and teachers are encouraged to ask their students to keep a journal throughout the use of this text and beyond regarding insights they are gaining into U.S. American culture. Be sure to ask students to reflect on more than *what* they are learning, to understanding *why* what they are learning is important and which actions/behaviors they will use as a result. You may choose to collect these journals periodically or on a regular basis to gain insight into what your students are learning and what questions they may still have about cultural learning. You can also use these reflective writings to help guide your students toward a greater degree of intercultural competence.

An Intercultural Tool

As a way to help students develop their intercultural competence, teachers may want to teach students to use this tool in their interactions with U.S. Americans and with others. This tool specifically addresses some of the key aspects of intercultural competence, including observation, coupled with skills to analyze and evaluate. The OSEE Tool (Deardorff & Deardorff, 2000) allows students to challenge their own cultural assumptions in order to move beyond initial reactions to better understanding behaviors they encounter in daily interactions. Initially developed in 2000 and based on the scientific method, it has been used in cross-cultural training programs and courses.

O— Observe what is happening.

S — State objectively what is happening.

E — Explore different explanations for what is happening.

E — Evaluate which explanation is the most likely one.

—(Deardorff & Deardorff, 2000)

OSEE starts with the basics of observation and listening, of really being aware of what is occurring in intercultural situations. As noted in the intercultural competence model discussed here, this is an essential skill and a key starting point. The next step is to state as objectively as possible what is happening. This is much more difficult than it sounds, and there are a variety of activities that can be used to help students practice the development of objective

statements, including viewing brief film clips and writing about them. The next step, that of exploring different explanations, addresses the need to see from others' perspectives. It also allows one to begin to move beyond initial assumptions that may have inadvertently been made. Different explanations could include personal and cultural explanations, the latter of which necessitates the need to know culture-specific information, including knowledge of underlying cultural values. The last step—that of evaluation—is the most difficult since it is often challenging to know which explanation is the most likely one for the situation that is occurring. There are a number of different ways to evaluate the likely explanations, including collecting further information through conversations with others and by asking questions. When these steps are followed, one is able to view behaviors more objectively, thus achieving a measure of intercultural competence.

Exposing students to the OSEE Tool can aid them in developing intercultural competence and will hopefully result in students beginning to move beyond cultural assumptions to realizing a key lesson to cross-cultural understanding: Most people do behave rationally; you just have to discover their rationale (Storti, 1994). The OSEE Tool helps students begin to understand the rationales behind the behaviors they encounter in intercultural situations, thus increasing their intercultural competence. As your students read these stories, encourage them to apply the OSEE Tool when possible and, especially, during their Real Life Application activities and daily interactions with U.S. Americans.

Note: If you are interested in learning more about cultural theories and how they manifest themselves in one's teaching practice, several highly recommended references are listed on page xxx.

Getting Started

In introducing this textbook in your course, we recommend that you start by asking the students to read and discuss the To the Students section. This will provide students with an overview of the textbook, including a rationale for why and how to use these stories as a tool for understanding deeper U.S. American culture and why it is important to explore underlying cultural values as a means for understanding behavior. During this discussion, it will be helpful for students to discuss their own definitions of culture and the differences between generalizations and stereotypes. You can then state how important it is to see these stories as illustrative of cultural patterns (not specific to a geographic area within the U.S.), which can guide them to a deeper and more holistic cultural understanding but will not necessarily explain all the behaviors they may encounter on a daily basis. Remind students that they will meet U.S. Americans who do not fit within the cultural patterns discussed in this textbook. You may also want to introduce the OSEE Tool to your students and ask them to practice with this tool in class by showing them photos of

U.S. Americans or video clips of TV shows and asking them to apply the OSEE Tool. You could also discuss critical cultural incidents and ask them to apply the OSEE Tool through activities such as small group discussion or written essays.

We hope that this background information has been helpful in preparing you to use this textbook in your classroom and in teaching the deeper levels of culture. The goal in teaching culture is not to make our students into U.S. Americans but to help them understand U.S. Americans better. As DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004) have noted, “The role of teachers is to help learners become aware of the role of culture in forming people’s interpretation of self in relation to others and the world around them” (p. 28). We encourage you to be creative in adapting these materials or using these stories and activities as a springboard for your own teaching as you guide your students toward greater cultural awareness, both of themselves and of others. Suggestions are welcome and should be directed to the University of Michigan Press (esladmin@umich.edu). Ultimately, we hope that this textbook will give your students a deeper, more holistic understanding of U.S. culture.

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