

# Bridging the Gaps in Global Communication

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Instructor's Manual

# Instructor's Manual for Bridging the Gaps in Global Communication Contents

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## Introduction

This supplement to the text for you who are teaching international communication classes is designed to help you aid the students in internalizing awareness and developing personal techniques for bridging communication gaps across cultures.

Doing so is critical today because culture clashes can occur at home, as well as abroad.

Although the text itself has learning objectives, you are the facilitator for students' achieving those objectives and more that you may discover as you use this book. Students have bought the book and paid for the class, so it is always our role as instructors to guide them toward finding their own way through a course by internalizing the information, making it theirs and serving them as a pattern for their behavior.

Three areas of opportunity you might want to consider are: teaching from current events, involving students in sharing personal experiences and accessing on-campus resources in the academic and student community for exposing students to different perspectives.

Benjamin Franklins, in Maxims attached to his *Poor Richard's Almanac*, had some advice for us here: "Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other."

Some of the ideas in the text for class discussions, group discussions and research assignments may guide you in expanding experience in each of these areas. This manual is an additional tool for helping students construct their own cultural communication bridges.

The text includes some of my personal experiences from having taught in eight different countries and traveled in several more. You probably have some experiences to share too, perhaps some gained locally. Students do too and can be encouraged to share them. Many of these can stimulate insights and encourage explorations. Creative solutions abound in this bridge building enterprise, but we have to broaden our experiences, shared and real, and expand our “comfort zones.”

When you get to the last chapter on developing a checklist for cultural “expertise,” I hope you and your students can add to it. That puts another “span” in the cultural communication bridge.

## Part 1: Global Sources and Systems of Communication: Concepts, Economics and Politics

### Chapter 1: Organization of Information

The organization of Information from all sources is integrated. The sources include information from people and from systems public, such as mass media, and organizational such as publications—printed and electronic.

#### Teaching Tools from Current Events

Watch mass media for some ideas to adapt to the classroom. You can make overheads from articles in print media and capture videos from television programs. Events also encourage Internet sources, some from news, some from established Web sites and some from blogs.

When you select an event to discuss, do your own research to be sure you have as much information about the event as you can find, make a list of the teaching points and introduce the topic to the class. Let the students tell you about the event. Their presentations can give you some directions you might want to go with the discussion. One quick way to get student involvement is to ask if someone is from or has lived in the country involved, if it is another country. It may be a religious issue, and see if someone from that faith is willing to share a reaction. Perhaps it involves a language issue or an ethic one, ask for help in discussing that too. Today, many of our classrooms are micro UNs, and we are likely to be able to draw on some good information. Although some instructors may be timid about using this approach because of apprehension about student reactions, usually students are courteous and respectful of their colleagues, even when they disagree with them. The role of the instructor, of course, is to be a firm and fair moderator.

## Involvement from Personal Experience

Current events do often offer opportunities for informal personal experience, but with enough advance time, and most current events offer this, you can contact additional resource people to spend a few minutes in the classroom with the students. If not physically in the classroom, you may get a taped commentary from a phone call to use in class or an email to share.

Occasionally, a professional colleague abroad or an alum may send you a personal comment about a situation that you can get their permission to share. Just having an individual with some experience with the current event or the effects of an event can give reality to an otherwise rather abstract situation.

As an example, I sent a letter to a friend in the Philippines whose home was in the path of Mount Pinatubo's eruption, and offered to help anyway I could. As it turned out moving expenses had been a problem, once a new home had been located, and her response to me about the destruction that eruption caused when shared with a class resulted in some understanding of the impact such natural disasters have on real people. A student talked about a US volcanic event in the state of Washington, and the comparison allowed us to talk about a difference in infrastructures, government assistance and transportation, as well as communication differences. This was a minor event for the US public, one that didn't get much coverage, but I'm sure was important to Filipinos, especially those from Luzon, wherever they were living in the world.

## Using Internationals in the Academic and the Broader Community



Many colleges and universities in the USA have international students and also students who have lived abroad with their parents. Most also have professors with some experience living in different parts of the world. If your institution has a chapter of Phi Beta Delta, the international honorary, you may find it easier to locate those students and teachers. If not, you can look at the list of instructors in your university's catalog and do your own research. Your language departments are a good place to start. International studies offices and international students associations are good resources, also intensive English departments.

Beyond that, the broader community has a wide assortment of resource people. You'll find Sister City organizations, World Affairs Councils and Fulbright Scholars usually willing to help you find a speaker for your class. One source I discovered by chance was the city's tourist and convention bureau that had some protocol experience from hosting internationals from all over the world. Some local restaurants have chefs from other parts of the world, and your music, theatre and dance organizations abound in international contacts.

International or transnational companies are another place to look, as are your immigration offices and many nonprofit organizations that work all over the globe.

There's a wealth of experience to tap, and your job is locating them and then helping the students who hear them understand that not everyone has the same reaction to an event, a situation or, especially, a country.

## Chapter 2: Concepts

Concepts are foundations for making decisions as individually and as a community.

Unfortunately, we substitute assumptions for information. While that can result in amusing incidents of miscommunication, it also can result in situations that cause international incidents, even turmoil. The way we think is the result of many elements from our own personalities to our education and experiences. Use the boxes in this chapter and others to give you some ideas about approaching this topic.

### Teaching Tools from Current Events

Five current events from the past few years are still “current” in that their impact was and is so tragic and compelling that they still offer countless opportunities to discuss concepts in the context of communication. Three of these are natural disasters: the tsunami, the Pakistani earthquakes and Hurricane Katrina that hit three US Gulf Coast states. The other two are human-made, one intentional—abuse at Abu Grave prison and the other unintentional—cartoons published in Western nations, starting with a small Danish newspaper, that ridiculed the Prophet Muhammad/Mohammed. All five offer so many communication elements to explore and assumptions to discuss, that unraveling the communication concepts underlying each situation is enough complexity to keep researchers, much less your students, involved for quite some time.

### Involvement from Personal Experience

In each of these cases, finding someone who has some personal experience is a rich key for insight. So many people from so many countries were involved in the tsunami, that

you may be able to find someone who was there when it occurred or went in later on some kind or relief mission. It is less likely that you'll find someone who went into the mountains of Pakistan so horribly damaged by the quake, but not impossible. In both cases though, you can find personal accounts on the Internet that will offer some personal insight, and some articles in the mass media also related personal experiences. The Katrina story was almost a national experience, and those stories are more available from people who were there, and are not going back to homes and businesses that were destroyed, or from aid groups that went in to help. The mass media are a continuing source as the story goes on with restoration and clean-up efforts and government consideration of what the nation needs to learn from this national and natural disaster.

Military personnel and government legal affairs people are still speaking out and testifying regarding the prison abuse, and the story is kept alive too by the appearance of more pictures, some as recent as February, 2006, in Australia. This story is not over yet, and is also an opportunity for discussion in the ethics chapter, as are the cartoons.

The cartoons point out a basic divide on freedom of expression, even in the USA, and the Danish editor, personally astonished at the consequences, said had he known more about the Muslim faith, he would have made a different decision. This is a story that can be revisited for a long time.

#### Using Internationals in the Academic and the Broader Community

International scholars in so many areas are obvious resource people for class discussions. The natural disasters are easier to talk about than the problems created by people, but the complexities of both have and will continue to stimulate academic research. Some of these scholars should be eager to talk about their findings and their significance.

Within the broader community, religious institutions are a good resource for all because so much of the response and the value considerations were a part of each of the five. The cartoons may be a case to revisit in Chapter 11 (religion) and Chapter 13, mass communication content. The more you can connect some of these “case studies” to various chapters, the more frames of reference students will have to the content.

### Chapter 3: Politics

Governments provide structure for their citizens, and they depend on the stability of organization by their leadership for their lives. The type of government, though determines the degree of individual choices each citizen can make. It also determines the freedoms of all institutions within the society. Students in the USA are often uninformed about their own systems of government much less those of other places. To be good global citizens, they need to understand both.

#### Teaching Tools from Current Events

News comes from different parts of the world daily, and students can learn by choosing five countries currently in the news and researching their form of government. That's especially useful since much of the news from other countries comes from government sources. It helps to put information into context if that government's structure is known and understood.

A case study in government change could be the February 2006 election win by the Hamas party in Palestine in that the party may move the citizens more toward an Islamic society. The interactions of Hamas with other nations, including the USA, not just Israel, also shifted.

One focal point that could be used in such an examination is the Internet. Students could discover what laws control Internet use in the different countries because this is increasingly a major channel for public discourse that may not originate with "official" channels.

Since China has been a major controller of the Internet, a comparison could be made of that nation with some others in the region. (The *Wall Street Journal* had a number of stories about how “work arounds” have been developed for Chinese users by USA based “hacktivists,” as they call themselves. Look for articles in February, 2006. In the same time frame, see additional WSJ stories about the removal of a newspaper editor over press freedom. The February 27, 2006 edition of *Forbes* featured the difficulties Google, Microsoft and Yahoo got into with USA citizens by cooperating with the Chinese government.) The types of governments in place can be the unifying point for discussion. Some students may have had some reason to experience differences either through email or through research for information about a country.

#### Involvement from Personal Experience

Students from many countries are involved in international travel, as are professional athletes and performers, and many USA students attending universities have passports that allow them to leave the country and return at their choosing. There may be some restrictions on the other end, such as visas from other countries that will permit them to enter, but they can leave their own nation without any paperwork.

Some students in the class may have a friend whose country doesn't allow them that freedom. If asking that question doesn't uncover any different experiences, the students could be challenged to discover what countries do restrict travel and what citizens there have to do before they can go to the airport, train station or sea port and leave. Students who don't hold passports could explore the process for getting one and discuss that, comparing it with some other country.

Another government constraint could involve employment. How many jobs in the USA require that you be a citizen of this country? Do some positions restrict a job to citizens who were born here rather than naturalized citizens? What would those jobs be and why might that restriction exist? Are there any jobs in the commercial community that consider citizenship? What about the academic community? Some students in the class may be international students who could contribute to the discussion.

#### Using Internationals in the Academic and Broader Community

The university probably has some workers there who are from other countries. They may be professionals in the administration or teachers, although they could be working in other parts of the school. Asking someone to visit the class and share with the students the constraints and the freedoms they have experienced from the USA on their opportunities to earn a living here would give students some insight into another perspective.

One of those might be education, and the freedom of educational systems at all levels to construct educational experiences for students. What kind of controls does the government put on these? There USA as a number of different types of opportunities for education including public schools, private schools—religious and secular, and home schooling. However, how these are funded and their credentials recognized depend on the government. Beyond that, state governments have controls over textbooks and curricula for the public schools. What is education like in other countries? Sources abound from all sorts of educators and professional societies as well as librarians and book publishers.

Freedom to criticize the government is often something that surprises others living temporarily in or visiting the USA. One of the reasons citizens here can do that is not just

the First Amendment to the Constitution, but also the fact that the country does not have a sedition law.

Although students have been exposed to sedition laws in history classes and certainly political science classes, they often don't think of it in a personal context. Having someone discuss that from a personal liberty perspective could help students realize that when they travel, citizens in other countries are legally prevented from criticizing their government and so are visitors there, regardless of their country of origin.

A diplomatic source would be excellent, if one is available, and if not a government professor could help, or maybe a student from a country with sedition laws. Students studying abroad, though, do often worry that what they say about their country here may be reported at home and cause problems for them or their families.

Because all of us depend on governments for community order and infrastructure, we all relinquish some freedoms for the greater good. Understand what those are in the USA and in other parts of the world helps to become a more comfortable global citizen. .



## Chapter 4: Economics

Politics also affect economics because the freedom to do business with other countries and to work oneself has both personal and social implications. Much of the world's trade is business to business, and that, as well as commercial transactions are a function of whether an economy has a market base or a government supported one.

### Teaching Tools from Current Events

One country to watch is Turkey. Although most of its citizens are Muslims, the government is secular and the nation has worked hard preparing for entry into the European Union. The entry talks may last until 2016 or longer and could end with the EU's current members denying that nation a place at the table.

Actually negotiations could end at any time that the EU finds Turkey not adhering the EU rules. One especially being watched is protection of human rights. Meanwhile, manufacturing plants are being revamped to meet EU standards. Products and their packaging are undergoing changes—all at extraordinary expense. A few owners worry that some anti-Muslim sentiment could work against them. The USA has been supportive of Turkey's entry into the EU because its position there would tie it to the West. What may be a deciding factor is not politics, though, as much as economics. The nation has always been at the crossroads of trade on the European continent and has seaports and the transportation infrastructure to move goods quickly and strategically.

Following this story as it develops provides a good study of global politics and markets, not to mention the complex cultural issues. Istanbul alone, with its “west” side

and its “east” side may be as interesting a study as what is going on in the capital of Ankara.

### Involvement from Personal Experience

Two of the largest markets in the world today are India and China, and some projections place them ahead of the USA within a few years. The only question seems to be which of the two will be first.

There’s ample evidence of this in business with American Airlines’ longest nonstop flight (7,484 miles) being from Chicago, IL, USA to Delhi, India. Venture capital has also moved to India, seeking high-tech investments. Some Indian expatriates have moved back home to India, or bought a second home there to handle business.

As for China, different USA businesses complain about that nation’s stealing markets from them with lower costs, and scarcely a week goes by that there isn’t some story about a trade dispute with a country that used to be known for trade only by Hong Kong. That also used to be the primary destination of tourists, except for the most intrepid ones. No longer. It has dressed up its accommodations, reduced the oppressive surveillance and opened some of its cultural heritage to the world.

These two countries provide an interesting contrast. India used to be more socialized economically, although it is a democracy. Then it changed to a market economy and went into a growth mode. China is still a government-based economy, and the companies it has let in are severely restricted in terms of the investment allowed and in their control of what they do have invested.

Tourist sites, big markets, suggest that it will be easy to find some travelers with first hand experience in both of these countries. Aside from that, it’s also likely that your

university has some international students from one or both of these countries. Either travelers or citizens no doubt can bring some “show and tell” to the classroom, and their personal description of the economy there, what it’s like to shop and work there, will provide a memorable experience that is certainly more entertaining than economic statistics.

#### Using Internationals in the Academic and the Broader Community

Beyond the campus, you are likely to find experienced members of the community whose companies do business in other parts of the world. Some of them may be alumni. In large cities, you may find a consul or member of the consulate’s staff to come discuss their country’s role in the global marketplace. One country is not all countries, but some issues are the same: changes in money value from country to country, different requirements for products or packaging, difficulties in shipping and handling and how this affects pricing.

What is especially interesting about the global marketplace is its impact on doing business for all businesses in all countries. Every business has been affected. You’ll hear more about the impact on the USA, though, because it still is the world’s largest market and it has more cultural, language and economic issues to consider. Most companies in the USA are scrambling for cultural diversity to help them succeed in markets where they have currently involved and to penetrate markets where they want to compete.

A video tape from the University of California’s series on nonverbal communication that comes with a guide for instructors is titled “A World of Differences: Understanding Cross-Cultural Communication.” The tape supports the idea that differences between cultures, when known, make possible successful cross-cultural communication. (The University of California Extension Center for Media and Independent Learning, 2000 Center Street, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Berkeley, CA 94704.)

In a special section titled “The New Diversity,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 14, 2005, asserted that all companies must consider diversity of cultural knowledge and experience to do business anywhere in this global economy. The next two chapters reinforce that message, but this chapter can set the stage for understanding the need to know, intuitively, what customers and employees around the world are like.

## Part 2: Cultural Context In Which Information Is Received, Interpreted and Understood

### Chapter 5: Nonverbal Interaction: Action, Sound and Silence: Music, Dress, Food, Touch and Personal Space, Expressions, Timing

Most of us have experienced some situation where either we were uncertain about what to do, or we made a cultural blunder that probably affected us more than others. Perhaps a situation was simply avoided because of too many troublesome cultural “unknowns.”

When others have attempted to communicate with us across a cultural divide, we may have misinterpreted either their effort or their response because of our own cultural ignorance. Since language differences often create communication gaps, the nonverbal sometimes is the only channel open.

#### Teaching Tools from Current Events

Advertising that offends someone because of its creators’ religious insensitivity, news photos that report an event out of context or a discriminatory policy that gets international attention because it places a group of people in an unfair light all can be good illustrations for classroom consideration.

Restaurants in the now very diverse USA have become aware of needing to tell diners all ingredients in a meal listed on the menu to avoid cultural or religious missteps. But, sometimes they don’t and it creates a problem. Hotels too have learned to anticipate and accommodate cultural differences, or risk an incident. The “public” today is a global one, and current events, some positive such as the opening of a new Asian market, and some negative, such as not allowing school children to skip going to the lunchroom during Ramadan, are rich discussion material.

## Involvement from Personal Experience

Personal stories not only have credibility, but also are more memorable because students can associate them with someone they know. One student telling about being literally “talked into a corner” by her roommate’s father had her classmates’ undivided attention and many of them mentioned it later in papers using the incident to illustrate cultural differences in social distance and concepts of personal space.

A faculty member from another country was explaining the many unfamiliar day-to-day living adjustments that “No one warned me about.” The lack of mass transit was one, and the amount of time it took to get from one place in the city another. Yet another was the home delivery of newspapers. She said she was annoyed for a while that she had to puzzle out some of these situations on her own until she realized that no one knew to warn her.

Students who have lived abroad, some when they were children and some as young adults, have stories to tell about being frantic about what to wear where, and lacking friends close enough to get some trustworthy advice. The educational systems also were mystifying in their process and protocols. The younger they were the much more troublesome was the unexpected obligation. College students who study abroad also have some adjustment stories to tell, but usually are much more resourceful in asking questions before they get there.

These unanticipated expectations for behavior are sources of discomfort as well as misunderstanding.

## Using Internationals in the Academic and the Broader Community

Music, the universal language, nevertheless has different expressions. A new faculty member from South America had a collection of ancient musical instruments that the university orchestra was going to learn to use. He demonstrated these in some music classes, and then branched out, on request, to share with other classes. Much can be learned about a culture from its music.

International students at various universities frequently put on a food tasting event where samples of different national dishes are available, with recipes—the original and one with substitutions for ingredients not available locally. Literally getting a “taste” of another culture is an invitation to learn more. One university’s food service that had been criticized for its limited menus decided to have once-a-week specials featuring food from different nations who had resident students there. The students were “advisers” on the preparation and their involvement, as well as their enthusiasm, made this a “regular” for the campus community.

Two very critical areas for cultural communication are usually personal—touch and timing. Both of these can be truly just personal. We all know people who don’t like to be touched and some who never seem to be where they are supposed to be. But, some cultures have norms for these that are very particular to that culture. A student from Mexico said her relatives criticized her for becoming too Americanized when she went home for holidays and forgot to personally hug and kiss everyone in the room. She, in turn, was annoyed with some cousins who weren’t ready when she went to pick them up for a concert. Turned out the concert wasn’t “on time” either. This also is a good example of “living in two cultures” that is discussed in Chapter 9, but her experience could be that of anyone who takes one cultural norm into a different one. She did tell the students that when she went for her internship interview though that started “on time,” by the clock, not by the culture.

Understanding cultural differences and anticipating them is one thing, but assuming that what you expect will indeed happen is another.



Chapter 6: Theories of Signs: Gestures, Symbols, Logos, Advertising, Other Persuasive Images and Language: Semantics—how signs relate to things, Syntactics—how signs relate to other signs, Programmatic—use of codes in everyday life

Communication is accomplished through this mix, unless the mix or some element of it conveys the wrong message. Thus, the study of the different elements of the mix deserves our careful attention and further exploration. Often classroom discussions can suggest another path to meaning, a new exploration.

#### Teaching Tools from Current Events

Signs that appear in advertising and as logos are most likely to get media attention and thus qualify as “current events” because they stir up controversy. Sometimes, though, students can find illustrations that are an international event waiting to happen. A careful look at advertising in the USA, and some logos, can identify cultural issues that have not yet surfaced.

One student brought five four-color ads to class at one time, none from national news magazines, which usually are careful about such things, but these were from travel and sports publications that are likely to be seen abroad, and two of the ads had the potential of irritating some minorities in this country. Why they didn’t also is another point for discussion. Acculturation doesn’t result in immunity to affronts, but may cause some grudging acceptance of them.

Hand-held signs, placards and posters, are a mix of art and language. These are carried by participants in protests or simply posted in prominent places to capture media

attention. Because conflict is a news criteria, such signs do attract attention and either are reported as an international incident or the coverage of them creates one.

Word choice in speeches and in conversations either overheard or reported by offended parties also become news, and the damage often exacerbated. A public official on a trip to another country fails to visit an official in that country and a “slight” is reported, which, if brought to attention may arouse a comment like, “That person was visited the last time we were here,” or called “not on friendly terms with us at the moment.” What is considered “polite” is not culturally universal.

The consequences of miscommunication are not always just bruised feelings. Although Saddam Hussain has not said what he thought about possible USA retaliation before Iraq under his leadership attacked Kuwait, some diplomats think he misread USA signals that if he did so it might be overlooked. Of course it wasn’t, and Desert Storm was the result. History, as well as current events, is a resource for discussions.

One of the most visible conflicts in this arena was the 2006 publication in a Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, of 12 editorial cartoons of the prophet Muhammad. These caused a global uproar after Muslim clerics aroused the Arab world. The question of freedom of the press and what that entails was a global debate, not just between Westerners and Easterners or Christians and Muslims. A search of newspapers, around the world, for that story during February and March offer a rich resource for class discussion.

### Involvement in Personal Experience

Experience with gestures and expressions are best found in personal experiences. Anyone who has traveled abroad can tell stories about trying to hail a cab, signal a waiter or acknowledge someone when meeting them.

Although warned not to use “slang” that has to be “translated,” we are most likely to use colloquial expressions that either have no meaning when translated, or have a very unfortunate one, at best. The admonishment, “When in doubt, don’t,” also often comes to mind after the event, and not before the words are out of our mouths. One colloquialism that this author let slip once was, “Between a rock and a hard place.” The translator laughed and said the Hungarians had a similar expression, so she translated it. That was a fortunate slip, but it could have resulted in a mystified audience. Students from the USA studying abroad are encouraged to leave their “message” tee-shirts at home, even when these are only school shirts and not political. These too can be misunderstood, as some students have discovered to their dismay.

#### Using Internationals in the Academic and Broader Community

Taking advantage of the wealth of cultural experience in the international student body is the best resource for this content of this chapter. The young, in all cultures, usually accomplish changes in the use of words and gestures. They know when traditional meanings morph.

The second best source is people traveling between cultures doing business directly with customers. Company representatives at trade shows are one example. In the academic community Fulbright students and/or teachers can bring fresh experiences to the discussions. From the government, Peace Corp people who have lived, often alone, in remote communities offer another perspective.

Of course we all see the world through our own lens, and it’s essential to be able to filter out the personal perspective to get a sense of the culture or the place. Personal

experiences, pleasant or not so, and agendas, whether personal, political or religious, bring their own distortions.

## Chapter 7: Theories of Symbolic Interaction, Structuration and Convergence: Applications and Limitations

As a social science, communication has no firm principles, just a broad collection of theories that attempt to explain our behavior individually and collectively in certain circumstances or situations. How much of this behavior is hardwired and how much is learned is an ongoing debate.

Our culture has a strong influence, though, because when we are very small we soon learn what is expected behavior, what earns us rewards and what results in punishment. As we mature and try to make some sense of what is going on in our lives, we look at the sequence of events and the activity within them for some meaning and then we look within that for a pattern to help us find a mental “hook” a frame of reference so we will recognize the same or a similar experience and be able to control our reaction to it.

Thus, the familiar makes us comfortable because we can plan a response. The unfamiliar has interesting consequences. Either we avoid the situation to escape the discomfort of not knowing how to behave or we go into it willingly, or perhaps unavoidably, and try to fit something familiar into the new and unfamiliar. We do this we make assumptions.

Some of those assumptions originate in the symbolic interaction used in all types of persuasive communication, especially advertising. But it's not just advertising that influences us. Videos and films offer fantasy narratives of convergence that attempt to get others to share the presented version of reality. Where your imagination is engaged, you buy into the imagined reality.

Teaching Tools from Current Events

When former USA President Gerald Ford was campaigning in San Antonio, Texas, he was given some tamales to eat, and no one warned him that the eatable part was inside the cornhusk in which it had been cooked. He took a bite of the cornhusk before someone stopped him. No one remembered what he had to say, but the world knew of his cultural mistake.

Some other errors have involved a misuse of language in an effort to be respectful of another culture. The late USA President John F. Kennedy tried to get it right in Berlin, but didn't. His hosts were gracious.

News media capture the cultural mistakes of celebrities, and you can find enough recent ones to interest, even amuse, but also serve as a reminder that most of us escape public display of our cultural ignorance, not that we don't stumble ourselves in strange circumstances.

### Involvement from Personal Experience

A friend was telling a group of us traveling abroad together that although certainly she knew St. Patrick's Day was an Irish celebration, she never really understood its significance and hadn't bothered to find out. Getting home late from work one St. Patrick's Day, she dressed in a hurry for the party she was attending. She arrived wearing a bright orange dress, and had to survive an entire evening of being teased, most of it friendly.

A call came one day to come rescue an international student who, because he didn't see any "bath houses" at a local lake decided to change clothes in his car. The local police patrolling the lake were not understanding of the situation. Once rescued he had much to say about "Puritanism." That "Puritanism" is what sent shock waves through some

students from the USA studying abroad when they visited a “bath house,” which was not exactly that. It was a pool for swimming, and neither gender wore swimsuits.

Local students were mystified because they assumed everyone in the USA lived like what they saw on MTV and in USA films. Their view of the USA was what they imagined it to be. The assumptions, even expectations, are sources of misunderstanding.

### Using Internationals in the Academic and Broader Community

Buyers for imports usually have some delightful and insightful stories to tell from their shopping experiences for their stores. If you can get someone who is buying in large quantities for a store like Pier 1, that is the large market view of some of these theories, but you can also find small retailers who have also had experiences to share and will. So will some travel agents who encounter some transportation systems, hotel accommodations and restaurants that can illustrate many of the points made in this chapter, although you probably will have to tie their examples to the theories for the students in a later class lecture.

For some examples of more collective cultural behavior you could use a current event such as Chinese buyers of personal goods getting a group of purchasers together through the Internet and then descending on a furniture store or auto dealer to make a collective “deal” or price on items that the whole group would buy, individually, not collectively. A car that each of the whole group assembled would buy at their negotiated price, not the dealership’s price. Get the other side of the story from someone in your community whose company is doing business in China and has had this experience.

The possibilities for making theory come alive are endless.

## Chapter 8: Theories of Discourse: Agenda Setting on a Global Level, Speech-Act Theory (Use of language, speaking as an act, the intent of the act)

Global discourse is a fascinating phenomenon. Classroom conversation should be stimulating; the topics probably controversial.

Communication of events and ideas once was like watching a pebble tossed into a still pond, with ever-widening ripples moving from the center to the remote edges of the pool. No longer. What appears in the tumult of multi-media today is more like throwing a pebble into the waves of an ocean lapping at the shore, swept away by currents and crosscurrents. There's no observable effect of the pebble,

Most information carried in the news media never makes it into the global public discourse. When it does, though, it is not in an ever-widening ripple. It's a global tidal wave, leaving few areas not drenched.

The facts of the event, though, are immediately overlaid with opinion, reactions. Badly needed critical thinking is in short supply, overwhelmed by images, emotions and rhetoric. When this mix itself is not dangerous enough to enlightened public discourse, it soon becomes so as the "news" is interpreted in the context of people's own experience and values.

The most recent agenda-setting research indicates that the news media not only tell us what to think, but also what to think about. Coverage of events and policies always includes quotes, so the use of language as an act, and with intent, colors our reaction. Social learning theory and cultivation theory both are influences on global public discourse.

Teaching Tools from Current Events



The same story discussed in Chapter 6, also works perfectly here—the Danish newspaper’s publication of cartoons that mocked the prophet Muhammad. How many people know Danish? How large a country is Denmark? The culture that is one rich in satire, and no religion, among many other institutions, has escaped that treatment. The Danish defense was that it was less of a “freedom of the press” issue than simply one of inclusiveness, treating their Muslim citizens just like those of other faiths. The Danish Muslims, already feeling somewhat marginalized, were not happy. The timing was bad too since the publication was at the start of the holy month of Ramadan. It didn’t help that the newspaper really was addressing a freedom of the press issue and battling what it saw as self-censorship in not offending Muslims. The cartoons were the contributions of cartoonists invited by the paper to draw the prophet. Muslims in Denmark called on their broader community for support, and the result was clerics denouncing the publication in mosques all over the world. In many ways, this situation, with tragic consequences, serves a case study for this chapter.

### Involvement from Personal Experience

Many public relations practitioners and marketing experts have experiences to share about getting information into ethnic media in the USA as well as in handling campaigns involving media in other countries. The PR people can also tell you some experiences with interviews in other countries, and the sometimes-surprising coverage that results.

The presentation of a media kit used in an international campaign showed many of the nuances of handling a persuasive campaign that had to be adjusted not only for different countries, but also for different regions of a country. With the world now a global

marketplace, such presentations, and their experienced communication people are not that difficult to find.

International students also seem to enjoy comparing the media in their country with those in the USA, and some good discussions can result. A student from Madrid said she like the political straightforwardness of the Spanish papers as opposed to the “pretended objectivity” of most USA media. A student from England said she was surprised not to find “national” newspapers in the USA, except for *USA Today* and *The New York Times*, generally available only at news hubs

### Using Internationals in the Academic and Broader Community

Ethnic newspapers abound in most large cities. Inviting representatives of these newspapers to talk about their audience and their publications increases awareness of the diversity of the city and what these cultures living vigorously, not just existing, within the larger culture are like. Editors seem to enjoy this and are usually generous with bringing to class copies of the papers for students to look at. Even if most of the students can’t read the language, the layout and pictures and an explanation of content and how that is gathered from the ethnic community is enriching.

One Chinese student had asked faculty members traveling to different cities to gather up copies of Chinese newspapers for her study on the differences in the use of the language in different communities. She brought her papers and a PowerPoint presentation of her paper to an international class to share. (She found New York papers used more stilted and “traditional” language than the San Francisco papers. Her theory was that more recent immigrants settled on the West Coast, than on the East.)

If you want to learn more about ethnic media in New York, the Independent Press Association for that city has published a guide called, “Many Voices, One City” that profiles more than 250 publications. (Go to I.P.A.-N.Y.’s Web site.)

Broadcast media also are likely to have Spanish language programming, and the station is usually willing to send some to class as well. The television programs are particularly interesting for a class to see excerpts from when someone is there to explain the choices for programming and how news is selected and presented.

The way events, speeches included, make their way into public discourse is a journey worth tracking. The twists and turns, the “evolution” of the story, have much to tell us about what we learn about the events from natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods to global issues such as climate change and protection of the environment.

## Chapter 9: Frames of Reference: Attachment of Meanings, Experiences, Living in Two Cultures

A major difficulty in learning anything new is the lack or scarcity of frames of reference for the new materials.

It's easier to understand something when you can relate it to something you already know. We count on associating new information with information we already have either from learning (formal or social) and from our experiences. The broader this learning, the more frames of reference we have, thus we are able to learn new material easier.

### Teaching Tools from Current Events

Stories or discussions in the news media about observations of different holidays, cultural or religious, are an especially interesting way to learn about other cultures. Many Christian churches have a Seder meal to help congregations understand the Jewish traditions and faith that are referenced in the Old Testament, and the components of the meal and the associated ritual often are news stories. The same is true of the Moslem month of Ramadan where leaders in the Muslim community are interviewed to explain the meaning of going without food during the day and only eating after sundown. The annual pilgrimage to Mecca is always a global story that offers background in the faith.

More is written in USA newspapers about the three faiths that share a common ancestor than some other faiths, such as Hinduism or Buddhism, although these get news coverage too, not so much for their festivals as for their art that frequently is on display in museums, where it has to be explained to be better appreciated.

Other faiths that exist in the USA community, such as the Amish and Mennonites, and the Church of the Latter Day Saints get news exposure too, often because of their traditions and their philosophy. Some other faiths are rarely covered, but every opportunity to bring stories of those faiths and their practices help the broader community understand their values. Why focus on faith? It's an easy example because it makes good news copy and it also is very important because of the values the faiths reveal.

Economic and political issues get much more regular coverage, but these are sometimes difficult to understand because there is usually no frame of reference for the government structures and only a general idea about the economy. Without those frames of reference, it is difficult to put news of the global marketplace into context, just as it is to try to extract meaning from some political actions. The same is true for other societies looking into and at the USA, or even each other, unless they are geographically close and have some historical ties.

### Involvement from Personal Experience

The advantage of having an international mix in our colleges and universities is the opportunity to have other students share their traditions and explain their holidays, secular as well as religious.

A simple comment in a syllabus about asking students to inform the instructor if they needed to be away from class for a special cultural or faith-based event, caused another student to ask for some examples. In the discussion that followed, several students offered examples and then volunteered to talk about them (often festivals, celebrations or other observances) at a later time. It's a richer learning experience for the other students than any

video or reading materials. Students often bring samples from the event, the most popular being something eatable.

A different opportunity came from a female student who shaved her head for a pilgrimage to Mecca. She didn't wear a wig, and many students were curious. She was willing to talk about what she did and why and tell about her experience. A number of students, male and female, said they were impressed by what she was willing to do as an expression of her faith. Two men talked about their experiences as Mormon missionaries.

The openness of the students in sharing to satisfy the curiosity of their classmates was a learning experience in itself for everyone.

#### Using Internationals in the Academic and Broader Community

Colleges and universities have attracted instructors, as well as students, from around the world. Some of these are experienced academics others are candidates for doctoral degrees and working on campus as teaching assistants or lab instructors. Usually they are proud of their citizenship and the richness of their culture, so they are willing to explain to others their traditions.

Some of these experiences are exotic and some more familiar, although not really understood. A Scottish faculty member wears a kilt on some occasions and doesn't have to be encouraged too much to talk about it. An Indian professor sometimes appears in a sari, and another in tribal attire during Kwanzaa.

Many of these internationals live in two cultures, so they can talk about that too. Other "cultures," though, don't have to be geographical. A former student talked about living with AIDS, and a faculty member talked about the gay and lesbian communities. A student shared his experience living with his lesbian mother. A blind student shared his

experience in that culture, one, he said, that is very separate from the seeing culture. A deaf high school student who was working with the sign language classes brought along an interpreter to help with the questions in another class where he was addressing the problems of living in a culture within a culture, Some wheelchair bound students have also shared experiences.

These other cultures, and there are many more that students can probably think of to talk about, often are ignored. The less known about them, the smaller the frame of reference for issues regarding their health, safety and needs—an obligation for everyone in the majority culture.

## Chapter 10: Ethical Issues: Sensitivities and Interpretations

When an ethical issue arises, the first consideration is what occurred, and then the next step is why? What universal principles might be involved? What values? What is an appropriate solution? Who should make it? What points have people on differing sides of the situation made? What are the possible outcomes? What will be the responses to these? Who would be the critics, and what would their position likely be?

As the world has become a global society and many countries becoming more diverse, this sort of an analysis is increasing complex. Understanding different positions that are likely to be culture-bound is imperative to even begin the analysis, much less work toward an equitable and fair solution.

### Teaching Tools from Current Events

Unfortunately, current events abound in examples of ethical issues. One that drew global attention had to do with cloning. In the USA, with President using his bully pulpit and veto power to restrict the use of fertilized human eggs for stem-cell research, many researchers turned to South Korea, home of Hwang Woo Suk, one of the world's leading researchers in stem-cell experiments.

His lab announced that it had cloned a human embryo in 2003 from egg samples extracted from two of its junior scientists. USA scientists at that time drew back from their support of his research. The Internet was clogged with supporters of Suk, confused about why foreigners saw this as an ethical violation. After that event, supposedly women had offered to donate eggs free for his research, but it later turned out that they were paid. But the situation got worse when the cloning pioneer finally admitted that his whole research effort was seriously flawed. The full facts may never be known, but what did become clear



is the value conflict when international scientists try to collaborate on such sensitive issues as creating life across the cultural divide of value systems.

Another issue in the news on a continuing basis is the struggle of the World Health Organization (WHO) to carry their campaign into all countries, especially those with increasing cases of AIDS. The problem of treatment is economic yes, cost of drugs, but prevention, the cost of condoms and education, is not. The prevention of AIDS is a religious and political issue firmly rooted in values. That is how it has been transformed from a health issue to an ethical one.

An additional issue that would appear on the surface to perhaps be economic, human rights, which includes fair wages and a safe environment, is not. It is a political issue with serious ethical implications. Although 98 nations were named in 2005 by USA Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice, China has drawn the most attention for suppressing individuals as well as religious, social and political groups.

#### Involvement from Personal Experience

Travelers have countless stories to tell about having to pay bribes to get officials to accept legal documents, to get past roadblocks on major highways, to bring in or take out of a country materials for which they have verification and documentation.

Residents of different countries can relate all kinds of pay to get work done on their property. Then, there is the issue of paying for publication of stories in the news media, and the USA government, always carrying the banner of transparency in a democracy, got caught doing that.

What role do values play in these many complex cultural situations? What adjustments can be reconciled?

## Using Internationals in the Academic and Broader Community

Ethical issues are not just the concern of religion and philosophy scholars, and perhaps a number of professional organizations. Ethics is also about justice. How can business and educational institutions operate in an ethical environment?

Drawing from an array of representatives in the community, some excellent case studies can be brought to the class. What seems to work well is to choose an issue or a situation and have a panel of speakers who can bring to the discussion different aspects of the ethical problem. Panelists seem to appreciate this approach, and their conversations and points of disagreement are a strong reminder that what is “right” is not always that clear.

## Chapter 11: Legal Issues: Government and Religion

Globally few international laws exist, most dealing with boundaries, on land and sea, and some relating to criminal actions. However, in today's closely-knit world, many other situations arise that create legal issues, especially in communication. Legal issues that come from government are more predictable because governmental laws are easier to discover than religious laws. Many countries, though, are ruled primarily by religious law.

### Teaching Tools from Current Events

Legal conflicts that are global in their scope are in the news frequently. Most deal with commerce or human rights. As an example, in February of 2006, American furniture producers charged a Chinese company, Markor International Furniture Manufacture Co, with selling their products below fair production costs. Interestingly enough, Markor won the lawsuit, with American lawyers it hired to defend them. When the issue is a conflict with a religious law, the issue and the solution are seldom as clear.

Often the problem becomes a diplomatic, not a legal, issue. Certainly that is not always the case, but it has happened when women from other countries have resisted covering themselves from head to toe when appearing in public in countries where that is required of all women, not just residents of the country. Missionaries also have gotten into trouble in countries that don't permit proselytizing, even when they claim that their acts were only humanitarian. All legal issues that cause international incidents provide good discussions and learning experiences.

### Involvement from Personal Experience

As travelers, many can tell of personal experiences that arose from a lack of familiarity with laws in other countries. Even though most travelers today try to find out what legal issues are likely to confront them in other countries, surprises can occur. One USA family traveling with children who were friends of their children spent a great deal of time explaining that the children's parents had given their permission, although they had no documents to prove it.

Other issues have arisen over taking family pets into other countries, some of which insist on quarantining the animals, regardless of veterinarian documents attesting to inoculations and such. Other issues are religious taboos, and in some parts of the world the inclination to make meals of the pets.

#### Using Internationals in the Academic and Broader Community

Experts in international commerce are excellent resources. Often consulates can provide speakers to educational institutions. Museum curators and insurance companies too are good resources. Shipping things across borders and insuring their safety are part of their jobs.

Many companies rotate marketing managers in and out of their international offices and bring them home for a year or so before sending them off again. Their experience with the laws and interpretations of those laws in other countries is especially valuable. Even when you can locate and read about a law, the interpretation that you imagine may not fit the reality. Community members with recent experience in another country can provide that elusive information.

Technology has created much more complex legal issues since the Internet is relatively borderless, and satellite transmission makes events readily available and accessible in real time also.

## Chapter 12: The Roles of Advertising and Public Relations

Advertising involves primarily product information and illustrations, often a part of a promotional campaign. Publicity is part of both advertising and public relations, but public relations also involves media relations and public affairs. Also, PR is more involved in policies and practices that can impact cultural issues in communication.

### Teaching Tools from Current Events

Few advertising and public relations international communication activities make it into the mass media except for something like World Health of United Nations campaigns. More stories about advertising and public relations efforts do get into *The Wall Street Journal*, and other business publications. Trade publications, though, abound with stories of international communication activities, especially *Advertising Age* and *PR Week*.

Stories of new campaigns and promotions as well as alliances with international companies are frequently in trade publications. Successes and some mistakes also are more likely to appear in the trade press than in other media, unless it's really a serious situation that result in an international incident.

### Involvement from Personal Experience

Students who study abroad, and those who have relatives abroad whom they visit are good sources for comparisons of advertising, particularly. A student recently offered in a public relations class how advanced advertising technology had been in Thailand when

she was there, especially with pop-ups on the computer that she said were two years later in coming to the USA.

A student returning from a study abroad experience that included a public relations internship in London compared that experience with one he had before he left with a local affiliate of the same international public relations firm. He noted that cultural issues affected the business practice more than it did basic strategy. Media relations were more complex there, too, he noted because of the popularity of the tabloids. Such first hand accounts offer insights not readily available.

#### Using Internationals in the Academic and Broader Community

So many companies have international connections that advertising and public relations resource people can be found in almost every community. Staff ad/pr people are often sent abroad to the company facilities or those of suppliers, and continue to interact with their contacts electronically. Some may not have gone to another country, but have “met” their contacts or counterparts “electronically” and learned how to work with them.

Agencies and firms in both advertising and public relations are likely to have accounts that are in different parts of the world. Often these professionals are involved in promotional campaigns, but sometimes crisis management of one kind or another. More frequently now, according to some reports, are crises involving cyberattacks on a client’s brand or reputation or its products/services. When the cyberwar has a cultural component, as it often does, getting some help and advice is critical.

As the marketplace becomes more and more global, efforts to chronicle some best practices continue among the practitioners. Most recently, the Institute for Public Relations has appointed a Commission on International Public Relations. Commission member Dr.

Juan-Carols Molleda and Alexander Laskin of the University of Florida have a report titled “Global, International, Comparative and Regional Public Relations Knowledge from 1990 to 2005,” a first in a long-term project to be updated periodically.

At the Institute’s 2005 Distinguished Lecture, retired corporate vice-president for Johnson & Johnson said: “Given the mature state of our profession...(it) needs and could well adopt a kind of global agenda. ... (W)e can afford to invest in thinking and actions and take some responsibilities for the improvement and enhancement of our entire system.”



## Chapter 13: Miscommunication and Consequences: Mass Communication/Editorial Content, Commercial/Promotional Content

As companies move away from “home” to bases around the world, what they often find most difficult to “transplant” is the corporate culture. That becomes a problem because all messages are supposed to reflect an organization’s mission statement, and the persuasive efforts in advertising and public relations are messengers of the organization’s values.

### Teaching Tools from Current Events

It’s not difficult find stories that talk about such issues. Proctor and Gamble discovered when some of its cleaning products failed in Italy that while Italians are meticulous about housekeeping and buy more cleaning supplies than most women in the rest of the world, they totally reject products that make their housecleaning jobs easier. P&G’s “Swifter” mop failed, as did spray cleaners. Doing household chores “easier,” did not equate to “better,” or even acceptable. Many such news stories abound in the popular press and in trade journals. Some values just don’t fit other cultures.

Western world health-conscious folks who try to avoid fried foods have a difficult time in Chinese-dominated parts of the world where ovens are seldom used for meats or vegetables. Food is fried or boiled. Fast food outlets from the USA do well, but not others, nor do frozen foods sell too well either. In many cultures foods are bought each day, so cold storage units in homes are small or almost nonexistent. As with the “faster is better,” mindset not working in Italy, the “fresh is best,” is works well in many countries where storing prepared foods is not readily accepted.

### Involvement from Personal Experience

Students who go abroad to study, although usually aware of different electrical systems, manage to burn out a hairdryer, at least, and have to find a way to charge their mobile phones and other recharagable devices.

Many nonsmokers will relate horror stories of being immersed in smoke after having spent most of their lives in smoke-free environments, especially in restaurants. “What’s different about living there?” starts a good discussion about values and practices often taken for granted. Coming from a culture where people attend places of worship frequently often astounds students who visit other countries where people claim a faith, but seldom, if ever, attend a place of worship.

#### Using Internationals in the Academic and Broader Community

Visitors from commercial language schools and some high tech places that host Websites from other countries can talk about reliable resources for handling translations and finding the correct contacts in other countries. Semanticists too can aid in understanding how symbols of all kinds go through a process that results in almost individual interpretation of the attempted communication.

Presentations of messages that have had unintended consequences from someone who has worked with getting messages across borders and cultures is useful. Sometimes these miscommunications are to cultures within cultures. A representative of the non-hearing community can help others understand what to do in such an encounter. That’s just one example, but a representative from any community can smooth the way for effective communication any culturally affected community you can think of. On campus someone

who handles the communication to instructors about special needs students can offer suggestions and insights.

The key is finding ways to communicate effectively, and making someone angry or upset in an effort to deliver a message obviously is not a good approach.

## Chapter 14: Developing a World View: Personally, Professionally

Expanding your worldview helps avoid some of the missteps in communication discussed in the previous chapter in a professional setting. A broadened worldview also aids in your avoiding embarrassing yourself or hosts at social and professional events.

### Teaching Tools from Current Events

Although all officers in the foreign services of nations around the globe are taught protocol and updated regularly on changes in the nations to which they are assigned or have contacts, many political figures don't always get this. The mass media often find such public gaffes to give them a story that the often-sequestered political meetings don't offer.

USA politicians are not the only ones exposed to breaches of protocol. Watch for these stories of a thoughtless or inappropriate gift or the wrong dress for an occasion, more often the case with women than men since western attire for politicians seems almost universal now. For USA politicians, making an effort to say something in an unfamiliar language not only makes the news, but becomes an historical anecdote that never seems to disappear, as mentioned in the Chapter 7 suggestions the late President John F. Kennedy's attempt to say, "I am a Berliner," that didn't quite come out right. The popular president was forgiven by the Germans, but the story remains.

Mistakes caught in the news media don't provide the only cultural learning experiences. Several stories have appeared about efforts to challenge and energize employees. Some Japanese expressed dismay at "cheerleading" kind of exercises in American plants, and Americans were surprised by the idea of starting each day with a formal bow to management. Other stories with information not specific to the workplace

can be useful points for discussion too. One such story appeared in *The Washington Post Weekly* edition December 26-January 8, p. 31. The headline read: “A Tiny Mutation: Scientists have found a DNA change that accounts for white skin.” The story tells of a “tiny genetic mutation that largely explains the first appearance of white skin in humans tens of thousands of years ago, a finding that helps solve one of biology’s most enduring mysteries and illuminates one of humanity’s greatest sources of strife.”

### Involvement from Personal Experience

Anyone who has been in an unfamiliar cultural setting at home or abroad has stories to tell on himself or herself, if they will. Being exposed to unfamiliar food can create an embarrassing incident, as can unfamiliar ways to eat a meal.

On the other hand, if you have good friends who will school you, you can pass the closest muster. At a wedding banquet, as the two only non-Indians, my late husband and I got to practice what we had learned about eating with the fingers of our right hand, keeping the left hand in our laps, without dropping one grain of rice. When the Hindu priests put freshly washed banana leaves in front of us, we knew the food would be placed on these, and we were offered water and a towel to rinse our hands. After the food was placed in front of us, as many of the 1,000 wedding guests as could see us from along the tables stretching the length of the room watched as we took our first bites. There was almost an audible sigh of relief when we “did it right.” In other parts of Asia, knowing what to do with chopsticks helps too, not just eating with them, but where to put them when you are not.

Attending ceremonies in places of worship also requires some instruction, or at least it seems useful so that you don’t offend. Knowing in advance is best, but you also

can watch and follow. This does have its risks though when parts of the ceremony are restricted to members of the faith.

### Using Internationals in the Academic and Broader Community

While people from other countries on campus are excellent resources, so are people from the commercial community who have some personal experiences with having to accomplish business goals in a different social, economic and political environment.

Human resource people are particularly good at explaining how to treat employees whose customs and mindsets were unfamiliar to them. Developing policies about work schedules and holidays as well as “breaks” for coffee or other refreshments, all have cultural implications.

Ad/PR people have some insights to share if they have handled persuasive campaigns abroad, either commercial ones or social, such as healthcare. A special section in *The Wall Street Journal*, November 14, 2005, reported that employees who represent different perspectives and experiences are imperative in a global marketplace where businesses need executives around the world who understand intuitively the different markets the company is trying to reach.

The diversity now in many countries, the USA included, demands cultural competence too, and astute companies are forging alliances with different ethnic councils for building relationships, including gaining employees.

Broadening the minds of all employees helps expand their worldview. In making this point in a December, 2005 lecture at Notre Dame, Ken Auletta, commentator on the news media, quoted from F. Scott Fitzgerald who said, “(T)he test of a first-rate intelligence

is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function.”

What other cultural “spans” are needed to bridge communication gaps across cultures? Please share: [d.newsom@tcu.edu](mailto:d.newsom@tcu.edu).