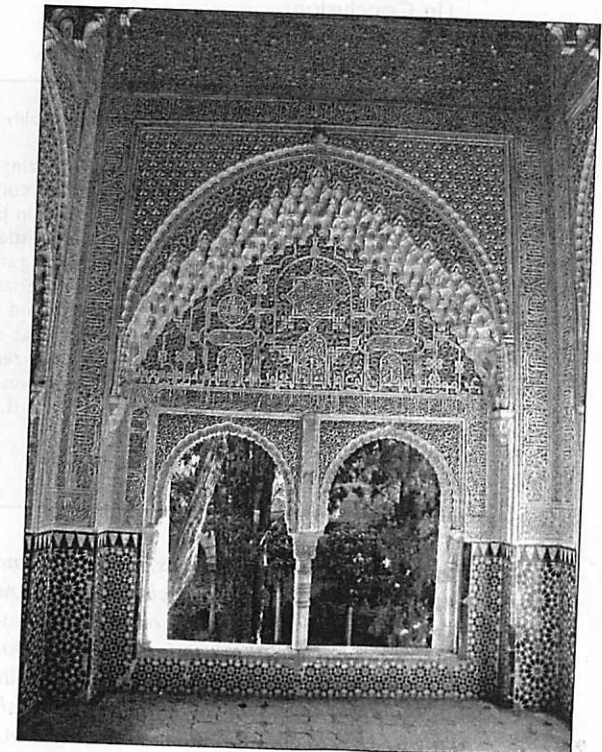


more similar than we have been because of virtual reality influences. There is a sense of shared common-ground community with others who live across the globe.

- Flexibility allows one not to become so Internet-centric nor contact-centric. Those individuals who are not digitally savvy need to understand how the Internet can help them communicate on a different playing field. Internet-centric individuals must learn from contact-centric individuals that their behaviors may appear rude. Try to understand that an open-minded attitude can help both Internet-centric individuals (i.e., those who rely heavily on e.net exchanges) and contact-centric individuals (i.e., those who rely heavily on face-to-face contacts) to gain better insights into the other group. Remember—we learn most from people who are different from us. Creativity also blossoms because of diverse mindsets and diverse work habits.
- Be aware of the impact and export of U.S. culture. Modern technology has blurred distinctive cultural lines. Be open to those who think they share aspects of U.S. culture (at least the tip of the iceberg of U.S. culture) and who form impressions and stereotypes about U.S. culture based on this exported culture.
- Ask questions in a culture-sensitive manner! Do not be afraid to seek additional information when you are not sure about the e.net identity of another. Learn to be patient with nontechnological cultural types and vice versa.
- Because of the influence of different electronic gadgets, we are going to communicate more and more with individuals who have diverse learning styles (e.g., visual, auditory, tactile/kinesthetic); we need to be mindful of our own learning styles and also respectful of and adaptive to others' learning styles and preferences. ♦

Chapter 13

How Can We Become Ethical Intercultural Communicators?



Chapter Outline

- Comparing Different Ethical Positions
 - Ethical Absolutism Position
 - Ethical Relativism Position
 - Ethical Universalism Position
 - Meta-Ethics Contextualism Position
- Meta-Ethics: Procedures and Guidelines
 - Identifying Key Meta-Ethics Concepts
 - Meta-Ethical Decisions: Further Guidelines
- An Intercultural Discovery Path Model
 - From Ethnocentrism to Ethnorelativism
 - Becoming a Dynamic Global Leader
- In Conclusion . . .

In recent years, Ireland has experienced a massive rise in the number of children born to foreign nationals, specifically, women from sub-Saharan Africa and a majority of them from Nigeria. Ireland is the only European Union (EU) country that grants automatic citizenship to babies born within its borders. In 2002, 3,000 non-EU immigrants were granted Irish residency because they were parents of babies born in Ireland. However, in 2003, the Irish Supreme Court ruled that parents of such children would not automat-

ically qualify for Irish citizenship anymore.

Amazingly, a number of these women continued to travel while actually in painful labor. There was usually little time for medical prescreening and prenatal care. Many of the Nigerian women put their own health and lives in jeopardy, in the hope that their babies would gain Irish citizenship and, hence, have better lives in their newly adopted homelands.

—BBC News,
October 16, 2003

In many intercultural situations, we have to make choices about how to solve problems, how to make decisions, and how to arrive at ethical judgments of what constitutes right or wrong behavior. In reading the above news story, what is your reaction? Is it fear for the mother, fear for the baby, concern for the overcrowded Irish hospitals, or concern that non-EU immigrants are taking advantage of the Irish citizenship program? In making an ethical decision, there are many things to think about, such as

the intent, the action, the consequence, the situation, and the cultural context of the case.

In any intercultural decision-making situation, we have to make hard choices between upholding our own cultural values and considering the values of the other culture. We also have to consider our own personal values and the values and motives of the persons in the ethical dilemma situation. Many of these choices have to do with whether or not we should emphasize our own cultural/personal standards or the others' cultural/personal standpoints and motivations. In addition, we should probably be pondering the means versus the end goals.

When we behave mindlessly in an intercultural situation, we tend to judge reactively the other person's behavior based on our own cultural standards and personal preference. However, when we choose to behave mindfully, we realize that making a wise, well-balanced judgment concerning any cultural issue is a complex, multifaceted process. Much of the complexity derives from the tension between whether ethics is a culture-bound concept, or whether ethics should be understood apart from the culture.

This chapter begins by defining different ethical positions and then examining the advantages and disadvantages of these different positions. Next, it offers some core procedures, concepts, and guidelines in the development of a meta-ethical philosophy. Third, the intercultural path model, which captures the overall themes in this textbook, is presented. The chapter concludes by identifying a set of final passport checkpoints for the continuous development of intercultural communication flexibility.

Comparing Different Ethical Positions

What is ethics? *Ethics* is a set of principles of conduct that governs the behavior of individuals and groups. Ethics has been defined as a community's perspective on "what is good and bad in human conduct and it leads to norms (prescriptive and concrete rules) that regulate actions. Ethics regulates what ought to be and helps set standards for human behavior" (Paige & Martin, 1996, p. 36). Thus, ethics is a set of standards that upholds the community's expectations concerning "right" and "wrong" conduct. There are four positions in the discussion of ethics and culture. These four positions are *ethical absolutism*, *ethical relativism*, *ethical universalism*, and *meta-ethics*. Each approach has both positive and negative implications.

Ethical Absolutism Position

Before you read this section, take a couple of minutes to fill out the ethical orientation assessment (Know Thyself 13.1). Once you have

determined whether you lean toward ethical absolutism or ethical relativism, read on.

Know Thyself 13.1 **Discovering Your Own Ethical Position:
Ethical Relativism or Ethical Absolutism?**

Instructions: The following items describe how people think about themselves and communicate in various conflict situations. Let your first inclination be your guide and circle the number in the scale that best reflects your overall value. The following scale is used for each item:

4 = SA = Strongly Agree

3 = MA = Moderately Agree

2 = MD = Moderately Disagree

1 = SD = Strongly Disagree

	SA	MA	MD	SD
In making cultural judgments . . .				
1. To treat each person consistently across cultures means fairness.	4	3	2	1
2. We should take cultural circumstances into account in making any judgments.	4	3	2	1
3. There should be one clear standard that all people in all cultures go by.	4	3	2	1
4. There are always exceptions to the rule—we should pay more attention to cultural insiders' viewpoints.	4	3	2	1
5. What is right is always right in all cultures.	4	3	2	1
6. What is wrong in one cultural situation may be deemed as right in another culture.	4	3	2	1
7. We should never be too flexible in applying clear, ethical principles.	4	3	2	1
8. We should understand the cultural contexts and customs before making any judgments.	4	3	2	1
9. Even if cultural circumstances change, rules are rules.	4	3	2	1
10. Without understanding the cultural traditions and values, we cannot judge fairly.	4	3	2	1

Scoring: Add up the scores on all the even-numbered items and you will find your ethical relativism score. *Ethical Relativism* score: _____. Add up the scores on all the odd-numbered items and you will find your ethical absolutism score. *Ethical Absolutism* score: _____.

Interpretation: Scores on each ethical position dimension can range from 5 to 20; the higher the score, the more ethically relative and/or ethically universal you are. If all the scores are similar on both ethical position dimensions, you hold a biethical value system.

Know Thyself 13.1

**Discovering Your Own Ethical Position:
Ethical Relativism or Ethical Absolutism?
(continued)**

Reflection Probes: Compare your scores with a classmate's. Take a moment to think of the following questions: Where did you learn your ethics? What do you think are the pros and cons of holding an ethical relativist position? What do you think are the pros and cons of holding an ethical absolutist position? As a reminder, the ethical absolutist position can be an "imposed ethical universal" position put forward by many industrialized Western cultures to the rest of the world. Can you think of any current events that support or refute this last statement?

Ethical absolutism emphasizes the principles of right and wrong in accordance with a set of *universally* fixed standards regardless of cultural differences. Under the ethical absolutism position, the importance of cultural context is minimized. Thus, the idea of *universality* means that one set of consistent standards would guide human behavior on a global, universal level.

Ethical absolutists believe that the same fixed standards should be applied to all cultures in evaluating *good* and *bad* behavior. Unfortunately, the dominant or mainstream culture typically defines and dominates the criteria by which ethical behavior is evaluated. Cultural or ethnic differences between membership groups are often minimized (Pedersen, 1997). For example, a dominant culture may view Western medicine as the best "civilized" way of treating a patient and thus impose this view on all groups. If a Hmong woman, for example, gives birth to a new baby and requests the nurse or doctor to give her the placenta, a Western doctor may find this request to be odd, strange, or bizarre and will likely refuse such an "uncivilized" request. However, within the Hmong culture, the act of burying the placenta has extremely important cultural significance and is related directly to the migration of one's soul and also to matters of life after death (Fadiman, 1997).

The positive aspect of ethical absolutism is that one set of fixed standards is being applied to evaluate a range of practices, thus preserving cross-situational consistency. The negative aspect is that ethical absolutism is a "culturally imposed" perspective that reflects the criteria set forth by members in the dominant cultures or groups (e.g., First World nations vs. Third World nations). The ethical-absolutism approach often results in marginalizing or muting the voices of nondominant individuals and groups in both domestic and international arenas. It pushes a colonial ethnocentric worldview.

Colonial ethnocentrism is defined as the rights and privileges of groups who are in a dominant power position in a society (whether it is at a political, economic, social class, or societal level), and these groups can impose their ethical standards on other nondominant groups or

powerless individuals. For example, one of the biggest debates in recent years in the United States is the legalization of gay marriages. As of May 2004, only one state (Massachusetts) legally recognizes same-sex marriages. Randy Thomasson, Executive Director of Campaign for California Families, argues vehemently that same-sex couples “disobey the clear orders of the people” and that they have “trashed the vote of the people and perverted the sacred institution of marriage” (Marech, 2003, April). The tone of the message is that heterosexual marriages are *sacred* and gay marriages are *deviant* from the standardized norms as upheld by the mainstream groups in U.S. society. However, gay couples believe that their rights and desires for marriage should be treated with respect equal to those of heterosexual couples. Same-sex couples believe that their love and long-term commitment to their partners are as sacred as the same characteristics in opposite-sex couples.

Ethical Relativism Position

Ethical relativism emphasizes the importance of understanding the cultural context in which the problematic conduct is being judged. Under the ethical-relativism position, the critical role of cultural context is maximized. It is important to elicit the interpretations and to understand problematic cases from the cultural insiders’ viewpoint. The notion of relativism values understanding and evaluating behavior in accordance with the underlying traditions, beliefs, and values of the particular culture; these factors determine the evaluation of that behavior as appropriate or inappropriate.

Ethical relativists try to understand each cultural group on its own terms. They advocate the importance of respecting the values of another culture and using those value systems as standards for ethical judgments. They emphasize that *ethical* and *unethical* practices should be understood from a cultural insider lens (Barnlund, 1980). The positive implication of this approach is that it takes the role of culture seriously in its ethical decision-making process. It takes into account the importance of ethno-relativism rather than ethnocentrism.

However, the danger is that this view encourages too much cultural flexibility and ignores ethical principles that are developed beyond each cultural context. Thus, evaluative standards of ethical behavior are related closely to the conventional customs in each cultural context. These standards can then vary from place to place, group to group, and culture to culture.

Furthermore, ethical relativism can continue to perpetuate intolerable cultural practices (e.g., female genital mutilation in Somalia and Sudan). Dominant groups in a society are often the ones that preserve cruel or intolerable cultural practices for their own gratification. They also perpetuate those practices that reinforce the status quo, which

maintains its one-upmanship and keeps nondominant groups in subservient, powerless roles.

Ethical Universalism Position

A third approach, a derived **ethical-universalism** position, emphasizes the importance of deriving universal ethical guidelines by placing ethical judgments within the proper cultural context. Evaluations about “good” or “bad” behaviors require knowledge about the underlying similarities across cultures and about the unique features of a culture (Pedersen, 1997). A derived ethical universalism approach highlights an integrative culture-universal and culture-specific interpretive framework. Unfortunately, this is easier said than done.

Although a derived universalistic stance is an ideal goal to strive toward, it demands collaborative dialogue, attitudinal openness, and hard work from members of all gender, ethnic, and cultural groups. It demands that all voices be heard and affirmed. It also demands equal power distributions among all groups that represent a diverse range of cultures. Furthermore, under authentic trusting conditions, representatives of diverse groups should also be able to speak up with no fear of sanctions. Most of the current “ethical universalism” approaches, unfortunately, are “imposed ethics” that rely heavily on Eurocentric moral philosophies to the exclusion of many minority group voices. Ethical universalism is an ideal goal to strive for—especially when multinational inclusive efforts have been made to include representative members from all disenfranchised groups to share their visions, dreams, and hopes.

Meta-Ethics Contextualism Position

A more analytical perspective for guiding our actions in contemporary society may be that of the meta-ethics contextualism position. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the problematic practice from a layered, contextual stance. A **layered contextual perspective** means that the application of ethics can be understood only through peeling away the different layers of the ethical dilemma—using in-depth case-by-case understanding, layer-by-layer 360-degree analysis, person-by-person consideration, situation-by-situation probes, intention-and-consequence comparative viewpoints, and integrative inclusion of ethno-relative and humanistic concerns.

From this meta-ethics or layered contextual perspective, subscribers tend to treat each ethical dilemma as a unique case with unique conditions, and each context as a unique ethical context that deserves the full attention, effort, and time commitment of in-depth analysis. Ethical contextualists emphasize the importance of systematic data collection from a wide range of sources plus the important consider-

ation of taking the total situation and the total cultural system into account. They also encourage the importance of cultivating creative options and seeking globally inclusive solutions to address these ethically wrangling situations. They try hard to move beyond polarized either-or thinking and advocate the importance of using human imagination and a creative mindset to come to some constructive resolution.

The strength of this approach is that it emphasizes in-depth fact-finding and layer-by-layer interpretations. It also takes into serious consideration the importance of culture, context, persons, intentions, means, consequences, and global humanism. The problem is that the layered contextual perspective is a time-consuming approach that involves lots of human power, hard work, fact-finding, and collaborative back-and-forth negotiation from diverse cultural groups. The plus side is that, in the long run, the time invested to understand the problematic practice from multiple contextual angles may ultimately help to save time and prevent further human suffering.

With clarity of understanding of the context that frames the behavior in question (on multiple sociohistorical, sociocultural, socio-political, socioeconomical, and situational levels), intercultural learners can make mindful choices concerning their own degree of commitment in approaching ethical situations. The concept of meta-ethics contextualism is really a broader philosophical outlook on how an ethical dilemma should be conceptualized and approached. It implies the importance of understanding the richly layered contexts that give rise to the right or wrong behavior. To engage in a contextually sensitive layered analysis, the next section suggests some practical guidelines to help you in framing your ethical stance.

Meta-Ethics: Procedures and Guidelines

The term **meta-ethics** basically refers to the cultivation of an ethical way of thinking in our everyday lives that transcends any particular ideological position. To prepare ourselves to develop an everyday meta-ethics mindset, we may use the recommendations from ethical experts (e.g., Moorthy et al., 1998) who outline the following preliminary procedures in analyzing problematic international business cases:

1. Collecting factual data (i.e., before rushing to premature conclusions, check out the details and facts of the case from multiple, interpretive angles).
2. Considering the total situation and the cultural context (i.e., suspend ethnocentric judgment and be willing to see things from the other cultural frame of reference).

3. Identifying the intentions and motives of others from three viewpoints: the intention independent of the action, the action independent of the intention, and both the intention and the action taken as a whole.
4. Analyzing the weighted positive and negative consequences that follow from the intention and action taken together.

Good intentions are necessary for good action; however, you usually cannot know the true intentions of others. You can only observe their actions and infer backward. However, you do know and should systematically train yourself to know transparently what your own intentions or motives are for why you behave the way you behave in a particular situation. Thus, you can assume full responsibility for your own decision-making choices and, hence, strive to act ethically in both intentions and actions.

Though you may encounter many ambiguities in your own developmental decision-making stage, do recognize that ambiguities are part of a maturing inquiry process. You can learn to live with ambiguous feelings while searching for the kernel of truth in a case. Additionally, you can motivate yourself to move forward, to think proactively of the multiple consequences of each of your choices in assessing an ethical dilemma.

Identifying Key Meta-Ethics Concepts

Ethical scholars recommend serious consideration of some of the following meta-ethics concepts—*rights, duties, traditions and stories, fairness and justice, consequences, virtues, and ideals*—in analyzing a particular ethical dilemma (Moorthy et al., 1998).

Rights are what you are entitled to as a human being or as a citizen of a country. We can think of human rights—the right to an abuse-free life—and everything is secondary to that tenet. The right to clean air, clean water, basic food and shelter, and freedom of movement and thoughts are, of course, also very critical. We can also think of civic rights—the rights of a citizen or permanent resident in accordance with the laws of a country. For example, the *habeas corpus* law in the United States means you cannot detain or jail individuals without letting them know what the charges are that are being brought against them.

When confronting an ethical dilemma, you can ask these key questions: Whose rights are being violated in the problematic case and with what consequences? Who or which group perpetuates this violation? Who or which group is suffering? The events of September 11, 2001, in the United States, for example, have dramatically affected many Arab communities across the nation. A colleague, whose last name is Mohamed, is frequently detained at the airport for lengthy periods of

time. In one instance, even after showing his California driver's license, he was asked if he could show his passport in order to fly on a domestic flight. Mohamed was born and raised as a U.S. citizen in the middle of America—Iowa City, Iowa. His parents were also born and raised as U.S. citizens. Unfortunately, because of his name and physical features, he may never enjoy the full benefits and rights of a full-fledged U.S. citizen.

To counterbalance rights or entitlements, we also have to consider the concept of duties. The word **duties** implies obligations and responsibilities. Recall our opening scenario about the Nigerian women who were crossing the sea to Ireland to give birth to their babies in order to earn Irish citizenship status for them. Many of these women, no doubt, were thinking of their obligations and responsibilities as mothers to offer the best opportunities for their children to grow up in an affluent society.

The simple word *duties* has both culture-specific and culture-general aspects. The culture-specific aspect refers to the standardized norms and expectations of a culture in conjunction with the role performance of the individuals. From the Nigerian women's viewpoint, giving birth to babies in Ireland would guarantee their sons and daughters a brighter tomorrow. Their traditional motherhood roles reinforce their sense of obligation and duty to their children. The culture-general aspect, on the other hand, refers to the pan-human aspects of duty and responsibility to our fellow human beings. On this general level, every individual in a society can assume an ethical leadership role in his or her terrain. You can be an active leader in exercising your voice to speak up against injustice and human rights violation issues. You can be a "just" individual by paying fair attention to multiple sides of cultural perspectives. You can also be a positive role model by displaying mindful ethical conduct in your classroom, workplace, family, neighborhood, intimate relationships, and other facets of your everyday life.

Traditions and stories call for reflections in viewing the problematic case as part of the larger history or storyline in the cultural milieu. In any society, there are some good and some bad traditions. Good traditions or policies should be continued, and bad traditions call for social change and revolution. For example, the story in Double Take 13.1 is quite interesting and revealing.

Fairness and *justice* are twin concepts that have both personal and cultural implications. **Fairness** means equitable treatment on a personal level or on a community-interest level. For example, if you studied long hours for an exam and you noticed several classmates were cheating during the exam period, would you tell the teacher? You may decide it is none of your business, or you may feel very indignant and report the cheating incident immediately to your teacher. If the teacher does nothing, you may even report the incident to the dean because you feel it is unfair that you did all the hard work studying while the

Double Take 13.1

Indian Dowry: Tradition Versus Change

Through a matrimonial advertisement in an Indian newspaper, the parents arranged their daughter's marriage. However, on her wedding day, Ms. Nisha Sharman, unwittingly became a national heroine in India after calling off her wedding.

Ms. Sharman actually sent her groom packing to jail on their wedding day. Because, in addition to her regular dowry, the groom at the last minute demanded a car, a flat, and nearly £16,000 in cash. In India, calling off a wedding can be a lifelong

stigma. Some women have been tortured or even killed by in-laws' families for inadequate dowry. Dowry torture or death has been legally banned since 1986.

On this day, Ms. Nisha Sharman became a national heroine because of her finally saying "enough is enough" on behalf of many Indian women!

Source: Laws pertaining to dowry, <http://www.ananova.com/news/story> (Retrieved October 19, 2003).

other classmates cheated. **Justice** implies impartial treatment of cases by using a consistent set of standards in dealing with similar cases. However, words like *fair* or *unfair*, *just* or *unjust* often reflect the meanings and value standards of the larger cultural community. Again, it is critical to understand the different cultural viewpoints in terms of how they view the problematic situation as fair or unfair, and just or unjust.

Consequences refers to taking into consideration the ramifications that affect all parties who are directly or indirectly involved in the problematic case. For example, in the case of the Nigerian women in trying to give birth in Ireland, we should consider multiple intentions and consequences of the case by asking the following: What are the authentic intentions of the Nigerian women in giving birth to their babies in Ireland? What are the consequences of such action—to the women, to the babies, to Irish society, and so on? Why are they doing what they are doing? Do the ends justify the means? Do the means in the process bring potential risks and/or rewards to the parties who are involved directly or indirectly? What are the short-term and long-term harms and gains? Are there any alternative paths or constructive solutions to such cases? Overall, if more positive outcomes than negative consequences result from the behavior for all interested parties concerned, then the means or behavior may be justified. Simultaneously, the means or the behavior of achieving the consequence has to be humanistically virtuous.

Virtues exemplify the commendable qualities of an individual. On a universal level, the qualities of human courtesy, respect, courage, honor, dignity, and integrity may be some pan-human virtues. You may also want to add your own set of virtues at different developmental

stages of your life. When in doubt, you may also want to think of how a role model (i.e., someone you admire or respect) with virtuous qualities would decide in similar circumstances. Finally, the concept of **ideals** regards actions that are not required but that you still take because it is the right thing to do. Additionally, your decisions have extrinsic and intrinsic merits to the community in which you are serving (Moorthy et al., 1998).

A *meta-ethical decision* is a discovery process, digging deeper into our own value system to find inconsistencies, resonating points, and creative problem-solving commitments. It also prompts us to gather multiple-level information to understand the reasons that give rise to these problematic practices. After understanding the reasons behind an objectionable practice, we can then decide to accept or condemn such problematic “customs.” Although some questionable behaviors across cultures can be deemed to be mildly offensive (and we may be using our ethnocentric lenses to evaluate such behaviors), other practices are completely intolerable on a humanistic scale. For example, the genocide in Rwanda and the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995 were atrocious acts condemned by the international community at large.

You may also think of the following two questions in making a final meta-ethical decision: (1) Can you think of creative solutions other than the ones investigated? and (2) Is there any way to prevent similar ethical dilemmas from arising in the future in this culture? Grassroots movements and the commitment to change at the local culture level are two ways to eliminate traditional problematic practices. Let us examine the following ethical case in Double Take 13.2 and discuss what you believe are the main issues from this case study.

Double Take 13.2 ABC Inc.: To Bribe or Not to Bribe?

ABC Inc. was faced with the issue of needing to pay bribes in a certain country, with full knowledge that they should not do so ethically. The only clear solution seemed to be to forgo business there. But ABC Inc. used its business savvy. Somehow, ABC Inc. learned that the bribes were not pocketed by individuals but put into a communal fund for work needed by the local community. Learning of the community's needs, ABC Inc. offered to help local officials to set up a school and a hospital for the townspeople.

Contributions were made openly and were considered part of the company's mission and social responsibility. Subsequently, the company was enthusiastically received by the local community. Interestingly enough, there was also no longer a question of being asked to pay bribes in doing business with this particular cultural community.

Adapted from Moorthy et al. (1998), p. 32.

At first glance, ABC Inc. looks like the clear winner in this case, cultivating its image as a benefactor—changing from the possible bribery approach to channeling its funds along alternative routes. When we look at this case from a meta-ethics analytical standpoint, however, the contextual reasons have to be placed against the cultural background in which the questionable practice occurs. We should also question the intention-action-consequence dynamics in the case.

So we can ask, Is it ethical that ABC Inc. continues to give money to the cultural community in the name of “charity” now? What is their authentic intention? What is their action? What are the positive versus negative consequences for the local cultural community? What are the positive versus negative consequences for ABC Inc.? Did they engage in virtuous, just, and fair practices in taking the interest of the local community into serious consideration? Are they continuing to exploit the local people, or are they actually doing something positive that would benefit the local community in the short or long term?

In each problematic ethical case, we have to mindfully place the ethical dilemma against our own personal standards and cultural judgments. We may not personally condone business bribery, but at the minimum we have to understand the societal conditions that contribute to such a practice. We can then reason that “bribery, within this cultural context, is a common practice because of the following reasons . . .” or “unfair child labor practice originated in this cultural context because . . .” Once we thoroughly understand the sociohistorical, cultural, economic, situational, and realistic reasons for a particular practice, we can then employ imaginative solutions that can benefit the local people. The following meta-ethical guidelines will further help you to clarify questions you have about making meta-ethical choices and decisions.

Meta-Ethical Decisions: Further Guidelines

Let us turn mindfully to our own ethical decision-making process on a personal level. In reading Double Take 13.3, imagine that you are reading a story about your friend Roland, who lives in Germany.

What do you think of this ethical dilemma? Should Roland steal the drug? If he asks you to go along with him to help out, will you? Why or why not? If Roland does not love his wife, should he still steal the drug for her? Why or why not? Suppose the case involves a pet animal he loves. Should Roland steal to save the pet animal? If the case involved your own mom or dad, sister or brother, close friend or life partner, would you go ahead and steal or would you see your loved one wasting away?

In everyday life, we make choices that have multiple consequences for our own lives and the lives of others. In the intercultural decision-making arena, we need to mindfully ask ourselves the following ques-

Double-Take 13.3**Roland: To Steal or Not to Steal?**

Roland's wife is near death with a special kind of cancer. The only drug that the doctors think might save her is a form of radium. The drug is expensive to make. A local druggist, Hans, has the special drug but is charging 20 times what the drug cost him to make—from \$200 to \$4,000. Your friend Roland goes to everyone he knows to borrow the money, including asking you, but he can only get together \$3,000.

Roland tells Hans, the druggist, that his wife is in agonizing pain and is dying a painful death. She really needs the new drug or she will die in

the next six weeks. Roland begs Hans to sell the drug cheaper or let him pay later. But Hans responds harshly: "No! It took me years of testing to discover the drug! During this time, my own wife left me for another man and my own daughter also abandoned me! No, I am planning to make some money out of this drug!" Your friend Roland gets desperate and seriously considers breaking into the drug store and stealing the drug for his dying wife.

Adapted from Cortese (1990), p. 159.

tions when we encounter culture-based tug-and-pull ethical situations (Ting-Toomey, 1999):

1. Who or which group perpetuates this practice within this culture and with what reasons?
2. Who or which group resists this practice and with what reasons? Who is benefiting? Who is suffering—voluntarily or involuntarily?
3. Does the practice cause unjustifiable suffering to an individual or a selected group of individuals at the pleasure of another group?
4. What is my role and what is my "voice" in this ethical dilemma?
5. Should I condemn/reject this practice publicly and withdraw from the cultural scene?
6. Should I go along and find a solution that reconciles cultural differences?
7. Can I visualize alternative solutions or creative outcomes that can serve to honor the cultural traditions and at the same time get rid of the intolerable cultural practice?
8. At what level can I implement this particular creative solution? Who are my allies? Who are my enemies?

9. Should I act as a change agent in the local cultural scene via grassroots movement efforts?
10. What systematic changes in the culture are needed for the creative solution to sustain itself and filter through the system?

Many problematic cultural practices perpetuate themselves because of long-standing cultural habits or ignorance of alternative ways of doing things. Education or a desire for change from within the people in a local culture is usually how a questionable practice is ended. From a meta-ethics contextualism framework, making a sound ethical judgment demands both breadth and depth of culture-sensitive knowledge, context-specific knowledge, and genuine humanistic concern. A meta-ethics contextual philosophy can lead us to develop an inclusive mindset and pave the way to a derived set of genuine, universal ethics.

An Intercultural Discovery Path Model

Snapshot 13.1



Intercultural discovery path: Path A.

To conclude this book, let's return to the theme of flexible intercultural communication (see Snapshot 13.1). First, check out the following story in Double Take 13.4.

To be flexible intercultural communicators, we need to communicate with adaptability and creativity. We also need to learn to communicate appropriately, effectively,

and ethically in a variety of intercultural situations. To engage in flexible intercultural communication, we need to take some risks and try out some new behaviors. We also need to be mindful of our own thought patterns, emotions, language usage, and nonverbal rhythms in relating to others (see Snapshot 13.2).

At the same time, we should also make a strong commitment to consider the perspectives and experiences of our intercultural partners. We also need to be willing to experiment with different styles of thinking, sensing, experiencing, valuing, behaving, and learning. In the process of changing our own approach to dealing with everyday

intercultural communication, we can develop a more inclusive way of relating to individuals right next to us—in our classroom, workplace, and neighborhood. This means we need to intentionally shift our mindset from an ethnocentric state to a global, ethnorelative state.

Double Take 13.4

I was age 11 when I fled Vietnam. At the time, I had no idea that I would be leaving my parents behind for 10 years. I just remember going to a meeting place with my aunt, two sisters, and my 6-year-old nephew to board a fishing boat. The sea was incredibly rough and devastating. Out of the 96 people, 6 died. I was so deathly ill my sisters did not think I would make it. For close to 10 days we were drifting on the South China Sea. On day five, we encountered a big storm. On day six, our boat began to leak. We were slowly sinking. We saw many big ships going by, but no one wanted to help us. On day eight, two big ships came by. They saw our miserable condition but declined to help. Out of desperation, our boat captain and a few men jumped off our boat and swam to the big ships to force them to rescue us. They finally took pity on us and took us in. We survived. We ended up in Thailand.

The first seven years in the U.S. were traumatic. I could not speak English, we were poor, and I was extremely shy. I was virtually raised by my aunt, sisters, and brothers—cramped in a two-bedroom apartment. We all had to go to English school and work at various odd jobs. I had no friends. I was really lonely. The turning point came when I hit 20. I decided to go to China to study for a semester. For the first time in my life, I experienced real freedom and independence. But more important, I found friends, a group of close friends I bonded with. They accepted me for who I am. I blos-

somed and came out of my shell. I am so grateful for my China trip and my metamorphosis.

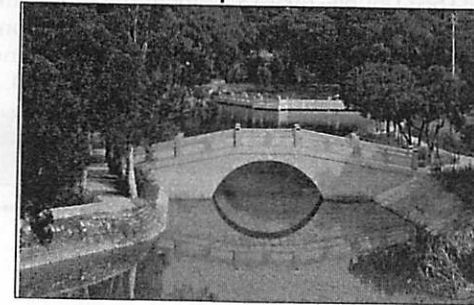
I have been in the hotel business now for 14 years. I am now a regional director of sales for an ultra-luxury hotel chain. Never did I imagine I would end up in sales; part of the job is networking and reaching out to new international clients. I have to make sure that I understand the needs and wishes of all these diverse clients and special celebrities. I guess I've slowly overcome my shyness! The job demands both personableness and confidence. At times, I'm still overwhelmed and intimidated by all these reaching out efforts and talking to international clients around the world through phone, fax, e-mails, or face to face . . . but I just keep going.

Guess I must be pretty good at it now because I have won many company awards as the top sales manager. I attribute a lot of my success to the strong support of my family and close friends. Timing in life is everything. Knowing when to open the door when the opportunity knocks is also very important. Being able to roll with the punches and being flexible and adaptable are also critical. When you encounter roadblocks or failures, don't give up easily. There is always another day. These are the lessons I've practiced in my adopted culture. It's really all about survival, and, yes, to **really live!**

TTB, a Vietnamese Immigrant/Sales Director

As his Holiness the Dalai Lama mentioned in a recent interview

Snapshot 13.2



Intercultural discovery path: Path B.

I believe that to meet the challenge of our times, human beings will have to develop a greater sense of universal responsibility. Each of us must learn to work not just for his or her own self, family or nation but also for the benefit of all humankind. Universal responsibility is the real key to human survival. It is the best foundation for world peace, the equitable use of natural resources, and through

concern for future generations, the proper care of the environment . . . without knowing it, we have neglected to foster the most basic human needs of love, kindness, cooperation and caring. (Shambhala Sun, 2003, September, p. 63)

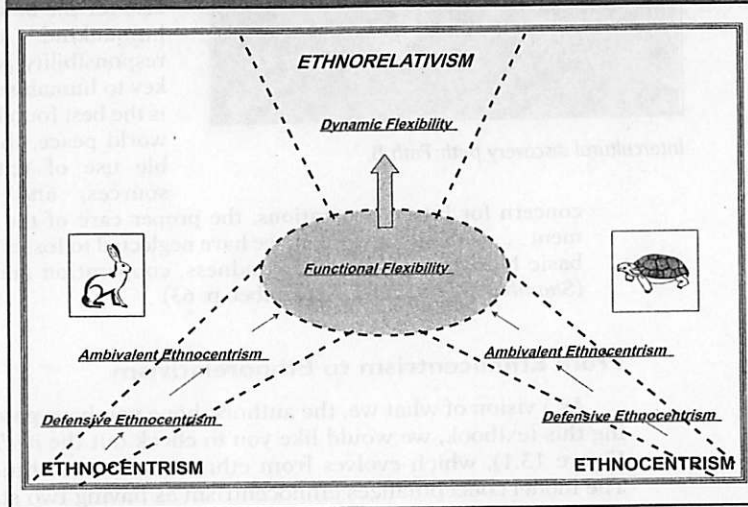
From Ethnocentrism to Ethnorelativism

As a vision of what we, the authors, hope you have gained by reading this textbook, we would like you to check out the *path model* (see Figure 13.1), which evolves from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. The model conceptualizes ethnocentrism as having two stages: defensive ethnocentrism and ambivalent ethnocentrism. **Defensive ethnocentrism** refers to having a rigidly held mindset and a tendency to create a superior-inferior gap with outgroup members. This defensive attitude leads to the use of racist jokes, hate-filled speech, aggressive acts, and even physical violence, to marginalize or obliterate outgroup members. **Ambivalent ethnocentrism**, on the other hand, refers to the confused feelings you may have about outgroup members. Cognitively, you start realizing that you have certain blind spots in yourself that you need to confront more honestly. But among outgroup members, you still act indifferent or avoidant in your behavior. Confusion or ambivalence, however, is part of an intercultural discovery journey. Confusion and bewilderment can turn into “a-ha!” insight and clarity.

Do you recall the individual falling backward along the unconscious incompetence staircase model in Chapter 1? Likewise, stumbling back and forth on the intercultural communication competence staircase takes courage, determination, and open-mindedness. We are

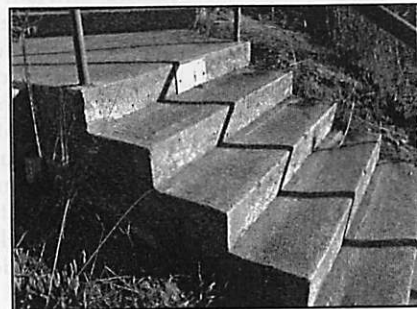
all not perfect communicators, but we can constantly remind ourselves that we are works in progress. Thus, do not be discouraged—even the best intercultural communication specialists slip into intercultural accidents or puddles! (See Double Take 13.5, about the rabbit and the turtle race.) The key is to be mindful of each step you take along the path and try to refocus your energy and commitment and continue on your ethically guided intercultural journey (see Snapshot 13.3).

Figure 13.1 From Ethnocentrism to Ethnorelativism: A Path Model



With each incremental step, hop, or jump, you may reach the functional flexibility stage. The **functional flexibility stage** means you can function adaptively in using appropriate verbal and nonverbal styles in communicating with dissimilar others. Cognitively and affectively, however, you may continue to retain your cultural/ethnic value patterns or beliefs. It takes time to change deep-seated cultural values. You may also intentionally choose not to change the cognitive or affective layers of your identity. Finally, you may arrive at the **dynamic flexibility stage** in which you can integrate the

Snapshot 13.3



Revisiting the staircase model: As you finish reading this book, at what stage do you now think you are on the staircase model of intercultural communication competence?

Double Take 13.5

The Rabbit and the Turtle

A Rabbit one day ridiculed the short feet and slow pace of the Turtle. The Turtle, lightheartedly, replied: "Though you can be swift as the wind, I will beat you in a race." The Rabbit, believing the Turtle's assertion to be simply impossible, agreed to the proposal. They agreed that the Fox should choose the course and fix the goal.

On the day appointed for the race, the two started together. The Turtle never for a moment stopped, but went on with a slow but steady

pace straight to the end of the course. The Rabbit, thinking that she had plenty of time, took a nap by the wayside, and soon fell fast asleep.

At last waking up, and moving as fast as she could, the Rabbit saw the Turtle had reached the end of the race course. Under the shade, the Turtle waited comfortably for the out-of-breath Rabbit.

Indeed, slow but steady wins the race.

Adapted from Aesop's Fables

best of your ethical, cognitive, affective, and behavioral layers of your identity and dance adaptively with your intercultural partner.

A dynamic, flexible intercultural communicator tries to integrate knowledge, an open-minded attitude, and culture-sensitive skills and communicates ethically with culturally dissimilar others. The following quotation sums up the spirit of *dynamic flexibility*:

The globally literate mind is a flexible mind. It remains agile and nimble as we learn to travel across boundaries and borders. Comfortable with chaos and change, it is able to contain conflicting and often opposing forces while creating cohesion and harmony from disparate parts. It's a mind that tolerates ambiguity and difference as it builds bridges across language, politics, and religions. And it's a mind that thinks and acts at the same time, all with a sense of tolerance and balance. By combining linear, logical reasoning with circular, systematic thinking, the global mind prepares us for the twenty-first century world. (Rosen, Digh, Singer, & Phillips, 2000, p. 174)

The dynamic, flexible communicator can swing comfortably from low-context mode to a high-context mode and vice versa, code-switch from individualistic thinking to collectivistic thinking, hold both value sets simultaneously, and see the merits and filters in both value patterns. In essence, the dynamic, flexible communicator is mindful of the complex layers of self-identity and other-identity issues and is attuned to the situational context and the symbolic exchange process that flows between the two intercultural communicators (see Snapshot 13.4).

Becoming a Dynamic Global Leader

After surveying 75 CEOs in 28 countries in a landmark four-year study, Rosen and colleagues (2000) contend that the following four global literacies are critical in the making of an effective global leader:

1. *Personal literacy*: Understanding and valuing yourself
2. *Social literacy*: Engaging and challenging others
3. *Business literacy*: Focusing and mobilizing your organization
4. *Cultural literacy*: Valuing and leveraging cultural differences

Accurate, culture-based communication knowledge, an open-minded ethical posture, and flexible communication skills are three key dimensions that we believe enhance the profile of a global-minded, dynamic leader. When asked to identify the most important personal qualities for leadership, business executives (in Rosen et al.'s study, 2000, p. 67) identified the following qualities as most important:

- Leading by example: 56 percent
- Facing change and uncertainty with confidence: 45 percent
- Being motivated by strongly held principles and beliefs: 38 percent
- Knowing one's own strengths and shortcomings: 31 percent
- Being committed to continuous learning: 30 percent

Furthermore, drawing from decades of analysis within world-class organizations, researchers indicate that *resonant leaders*—whether CEOs or managers—excel not just through personality or skill but also by connecting with others using emotional intelligence (EI) competencies (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). These same researchers have identified four main domains of EI: *self-awareness*, *self-management*, *social awareness*, and *relationship management*. Drawing from EI research work (Bennett-Goleman, 2001; Goleman et al., 2002), we as authors believe that in developing a global-minded approach to ethical communication, one needs to develop a strong sense of emotional

Snapshot 13.4



Intercultural discovery path: Path C.

self-awareness and accurate assessment of his or her own ethnocentric states.

We also need to develop a sense of nimbleness to adapt to the changing intercultural situations on a day-to-day basis. We should therefore take time to develop both analytical and emotional empathy to experience things from the other person's cultural frame of reference. For example, to be an ethical global leader, you can assume active responsibility at your campus or workplace to foster an inclusive climate and to cultivate a respectful vision for members from diverse walks of life. You can thus serve as a positive change catalyst to inspire others to learn about intercultural and domestic diversity issues in your very own backyard.

Finally, ethical intercultural communicators practice the following passport guidelines:

- Flexible intercultural communication is adaptive.
- Flexible intercultural communication is creative.
- Flexible intercultural communication is experimental.
- Flexible intercultural communication is making detours and having the courage to try again.
- Flexible intercultural communication is knowing thyself on a continuous basis.
- Flexible intercultural communication is other-centered.
- Flexible intercultural communication is about identity respect issues.
- Flexible intercultural communication is the intentional development of mindfulness.
- Flexible intercultural communication is making hard, ethical choices.
- Flexible intercultural communication is a developmental, lifelong learning journey.

In Conclusion . . .

This book highlights some of the knowledge and skills that all of us can practice in approaching everyday intercultural situations. To engage in dynamic flexibility, we have to be simultaneously adaptive and creative in synchronizing our words, movements, and breath with the words, movements, and breath of the culturally dissimilar other. Dynamic flexibility also calls forth our adventurous spirit and risk-tak-

ing abilities in reaching out to communicate with culturally dissimilar others.

An intercultural life is a creative life that demands both playfulness and mindfulness in transforming one's intercultural journey into a discovery process. Your journey may be filled with trials and tribulations and meandering paths. However, with the knowledge and skills presented in this book and with committed practice, you will surely uncover many hidden trails and unexpected delights. May you have the courage to experiment and to explore new terrain in your everyday intercultural walk, strolling and experiencing the diverse richness of the human spirit. ♦

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