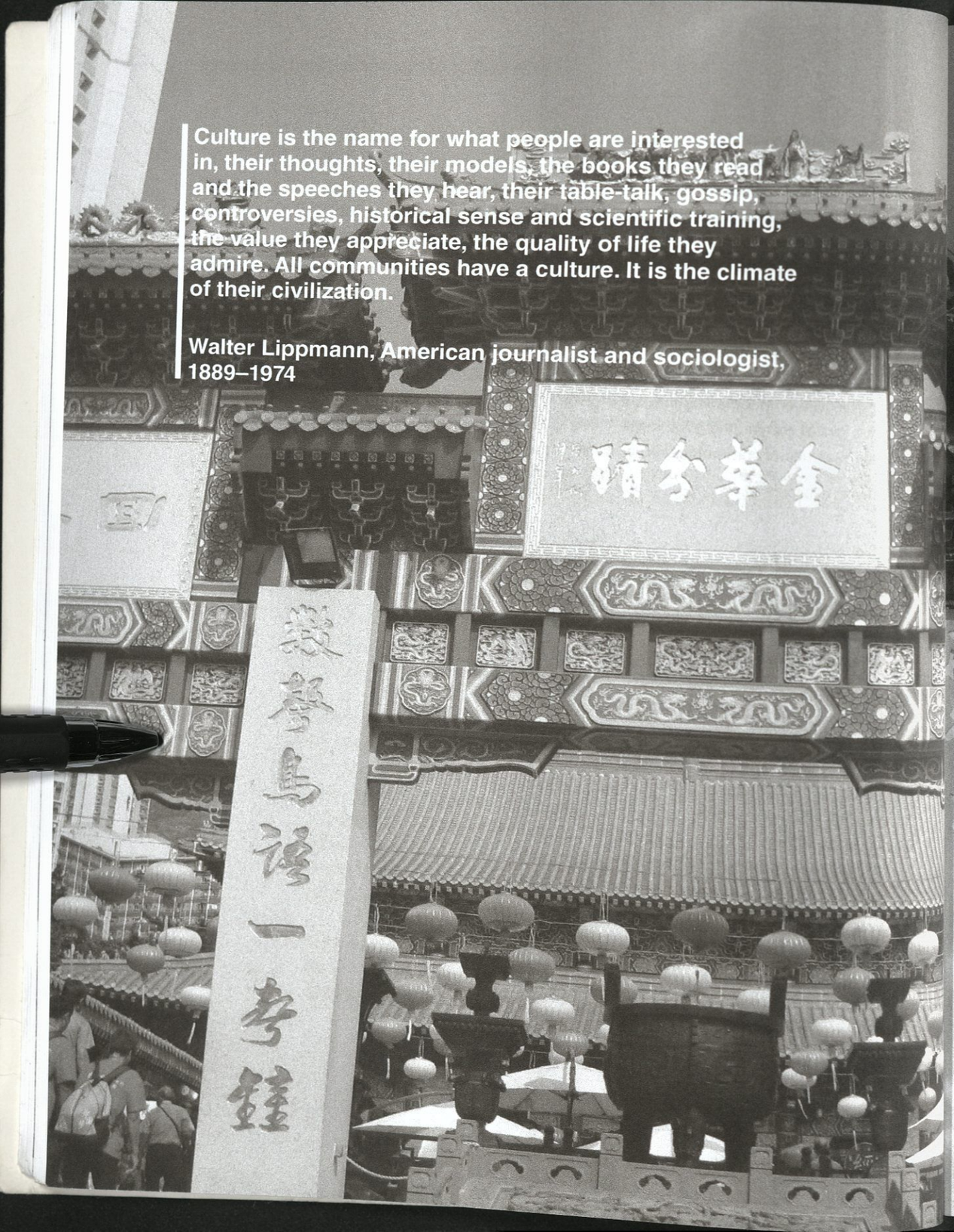
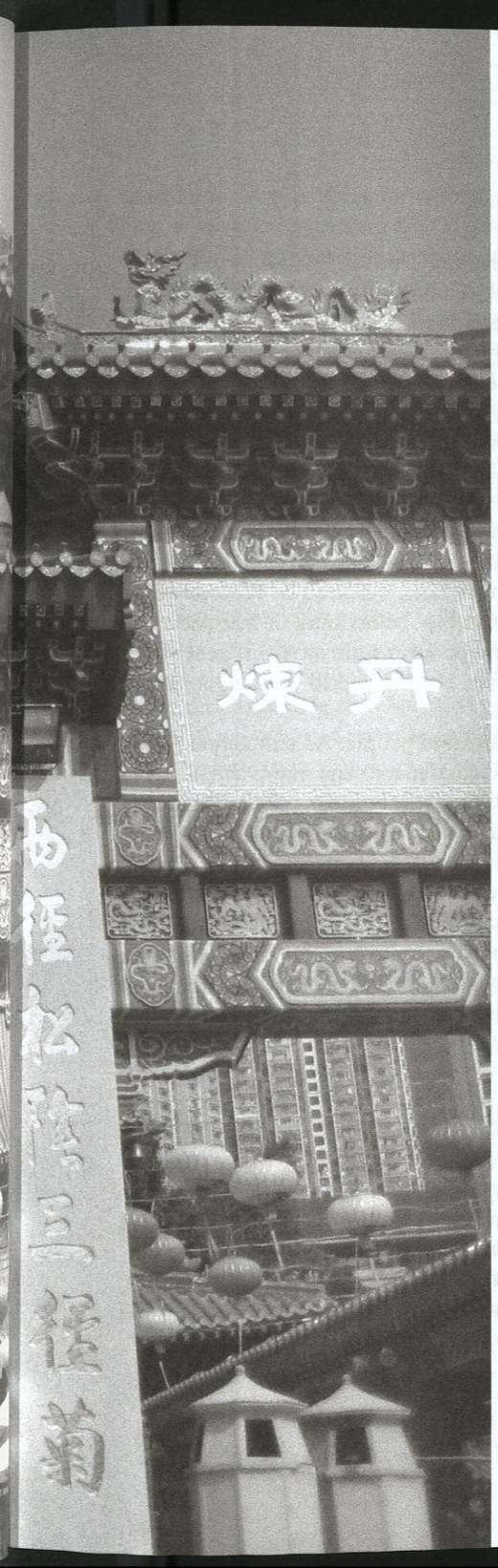


> Culture is the name for what people are interested in, their thoughts, their models, the books they read and the speeches they hear, their table-talk, gossip, controversies, historical sense and scientific training, the value they appreciate, the quality of life they admire. All communities have a culture. It is the climate of their civilization.
>
> Walter Lippmann, American journalist and sociologist, 1889–1974



2

CULTURE AND PEOPLE

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Identify different components and characteristics of culture.
- Define and analyse different types of subcultures.
- Explain discursive construction of culture and identity.
- Evaluate different approaches to studying culture.

INTRODUCTION

The word 'culture' originated from the Latin word 'cultura', which means 'to till' (as in till the soil or land). In its original meaning, therefore, culture is a process related to the tending of something, such as crops or animals. The word shares its etymology with modern English words such as agriculture, cultivate and colony. Eventually, the term was extended to incorporate ideas related to the human mind and a state of being 'cultivated'. Basically, culture consists of a group or community's traditions, customs, norms, beliefs, values and thought patterns, passed down from generation to generation. This includes food, music, language, dress codes, artefacts, family, organization, politics, stories, the production and distribution of goods, and so on. As Edward T. Hall (1966: x) states, culture is 'those deep, common, unstated experiences which members of a given culture share, communicate without knowing, and which form the backdrop against which all other events are judged'. Being a member of a cultural group implies that you have been nurtured by its core values and understand what constitutes 'desirable' and 'undesirable' behaviours in that particular system (Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2005). While different people might have different norms for judging behaviours, common to all people is that we see our world through culturally tinted lenses, and we rarely take them off.

This chapter explores the relationship between culture and people. As culture permeates the entire way of life of a group of people, it can be defined at macro and micro levels. At the micro level, culture can be defined by race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientations, religion, political affiliation, physical ability and so forth. Hence, there are subcultures within culture. Either at the macro or micro level, culture fosters a sense of shared identity and solidarity among its members. The chapter first identifies the components and characteristics of culture, and then analyses the different types of subcultures. In analysing the relationship between culture and people, the chapter discusses the discursive construction of culture and identity. We also introduce emic and etic approaches to studying culture. Throughout the chapter, we emphasize that culture is not innate; it is learned through communication. Therefore, culture and communication are intertwined.

COMPONENTS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

For decades, scholars across the academic spectrum have grappled with and attempted to define culture. Almost 200 definitions can be located, each attempting to delineate the boundaries and inclusions of the concept by drawing upon such synonymous ideas as community, minorities, social groups, social class, nationalities, geographic units, societies and so forth. For example, the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci (2000) conceptualized culture as the creative

meaning-making process by which people make sense of their social world. It represents their active relation to the wider social and material world. American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) defines culture as a web that people themselves have spun. As a web, culture both confines members to their social realty and facilitates their functioning in this reality. Raymond Williams (1989), a British cultural studies scholar, argues that culture is the product of individuals' whole committed personal and social experience; it is the product of a whole people and offers individual meanings. Everett M. Rogers and Thomas M. Steinfatt (1999: 79) define culture as 'the total way of life of a people, composed of their learned and shared behaviour patterns, values, norms, and material objects'. While Gramsci, Geertz, Williams, and Rogers and Steinfatt represent only a small number of the scholars who have attempted to define culture, they serve to illustrate the multifaceted nature of culture.

Although definitions of culture vary across different fields, scholars agree that culture is pervasive in human life and governs people's behaviours. Building on this consensus about culture, this chapter defines *culture* as the particular way of life of a group of people and the meaning-making process by which people make sense of their social world. Culture comprises the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, traditions, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, worldviews, material objects and geographic territory. This definition emphasizes the pervasive nature of culture; it also confirms that culture is a process as well as a product of communication because culture is developed, manifested, shared and maintained through communication. As Carley Dodd (1998: 37) argues, 'Culture is like the luggage we carry', and when we open each pocket of our cultural suitcase, we explore an interrelated set of group identities, beliefs, values, activities, rules and customs, institutions and communication patterns arising from our daily needs and rituals.

DO IT!

Talk to five people to find out about their specific morning rituals. Write down their responses. How does their morning start? Do they drink tea, coffee or milk when they wake up? Do they read a print newspaper, or do they read news online, or do they listen to news on the radio? Or do they avoid media completely in the morning? After carefully going over their responses, write one paragraph summarizing the patterns of behaviour related to their morning rituals and see whether you can relate them to culture.

Components of culture

Intercultural communication scholars have categorized the components of culture by levels to help us better understand the influence of culture on different aspects of our life.

This chapter adopts the model by Dodd (1998), which groups cultural components into three levels, as shown in the model in Figure 2.1: the inner core, the intermediate layer and the outer layer of culture.

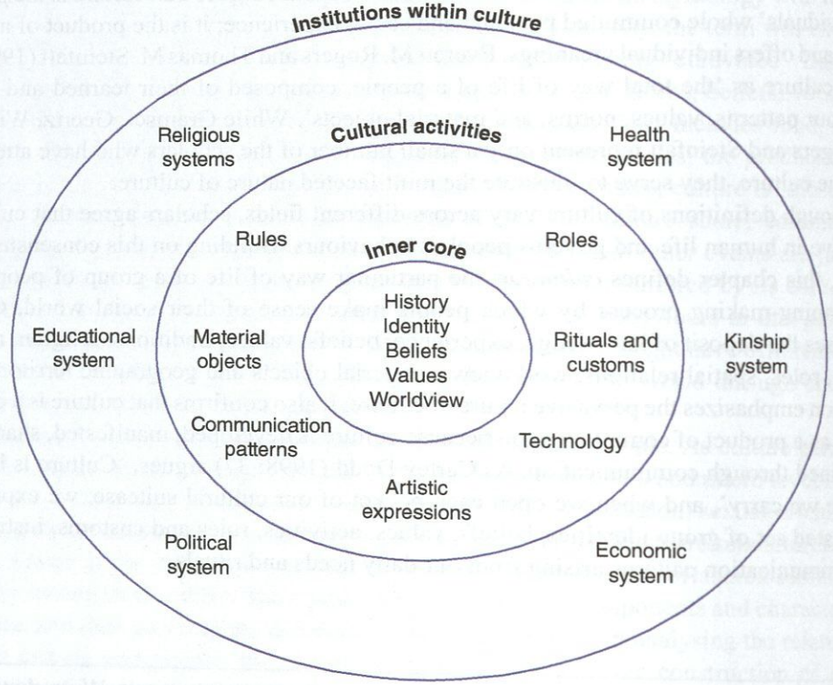


FIGURE 2.1 A model of culture

Source: Adapted from Dodd, Carley H. (1998) *Dynamics of Intercultural Communication* (5th edn). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill. p. 38. Used with permission.

The inner core of culture

The inner core of culture consists of history, identity, beliefs and values, and the worldviews of a cultural group (Dodd, 1998). Every culture has a history that is the repository of cultural heritage and development. Totems, archives, architecture, ancient languages and paintings are just some of the ways in which a culture records and expresses its heritage and tradition. The power of heritage demonstrates the continuity of a culture from generation to

generation, binding its members together and providing a sense of *identity*. Identity (or, more appropriately, identities) gives us a location in the world and reflects the link between us and the society. For example, pre-colonial Maori society in what today is New Zealand was communal and tribal based. Within Maori society, identity was determined by the satisfactory fulfilment of social obligations towards biological kin through *whanau* (extended family based on shared genealogy), *hapu* (sub-tribes comprising several *whanau*) and *iwi* (tribes comprising *hapu*) (Houkamaua, 2010). In this regard, *whanau* obligations were central to self-identity.

Each culture has a window through which its members perceive reality and other people. *Beliefs* are an individual's representations of reality viewed through that cultural window. Some beliefs are seen as very likely to be true; others are seen as less probable. For example, Aboriginal cultural beliefs are based on spiritual beliefs, where there are direct links between land, language, dreaming and people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia traditionally have a strong physical and spiritual bond with the Australian landscape through 'the Dreaming', which is believed to represent their origin and early existence. Another example of a belief from Slovenian culture is that people hang horseshoes over their doors to bring positive spirits and good luck. A further example is worshipping in Wong Tai Sin Temple, a well-known shrine in Hong Kong. The temple is famed for the many prayers answered: 'What you request is what you get.' On the Chinese New Year's Eve, thousands of worshippers wait outside the temple before midnight and rush in to the main altar to offer Wong Tai Sin their glowing incense sticks when the new year comes. As the tradition goes, the earlier they offer the incense, the better luck they will have that year.

Culture also has concepts of ultimate significance and of long-term importance, known as *values*, that go beyond statements of truth. Values tell the cultural group members how to judge good or bad, right or wrong. Values enshrine what is worth fighting for, what is

PHOTO 2.1 Wong Tai Sin Temple, a well-known shrine and major tourist attraction in Hong Kong.

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worth sacrificing, what should be protected and what should be given up. Cultural values involve judgements, and so values differ across cultures. For example, US American culture teaches people the values of independence, privacy and competition. Malay culture teaches people the values of harmony, reciprocity, non-competitiveness, loyalty to superiors and thrift. Hierarchy is valued in Korean culture, while equality is treasured in Switzerland. Our core understanding of good and evil, right and wrong, true and false, is taught in a cultural context.

A culture's belief about nature and the working of the universe is called a *worldview*. Understanding the worldview of a culture can help predict its members' thoughts and behavioural patterns. For example, according to the Judaeo-Christian understanding of human nature, the first humans were created in the image of God. *Genesis* declares that God said 'Let us make [humans] in our image, in our likeness and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground'. In Japanese Shinto (an ancient Japanese religion), the gods, called *kami* (deities) take the form of wind, rain, mountains, trees, rivers and fertility. Nature is sacred; to be in contact with nature is to be close to the gods, hence natural objects are worshipped as sacred spirits. Believers of Shinto also respect animals as messengers of the gods. From these examples we can see that a worldview is a belief system about the nature of the universe, its perceived effects on human behaviour, and humans' place in the universe (Dodd, 1998).

THEORY CORNER

DIGITAL CULTURE

Culture as a powerful force affects human behaviour and the ways we experience the world. At the same time, culture is shaped by the dominant economic and political system of the society (Bourdieu, 1977). The rapid spread of digital culture in most parts of the world has been attributed to many global social, political and economic changes. Digital culture stands for the changes brought about by contemporary digital, networked and personalized media in our society and it signifies the transformation from print- and broadcast-centred media to networked media which rely on digital communication technologies. Hence, digital culture represents the contemporary phase of communication technologies. The emergence of digital culture is associated with more user participation and a more personalized and visually rich media environment. Young people born in and after 1990 are commonly regarded as the digital generation; and the term 'digital culture' has come to refer to the multiple ways in which young people engage with digital media and technologies in their daily lives.

Research on digital culture investigates the roles that the internet, new media and digital technologies play in contemporary society, including the everyday life of ordinary people. Not only in developed countries or urban regions, even in developing countries and in rural areas, youth digital culture is emerging. Pathak-Shelat and DeShano (2013) studied the case of a small town of Gujarat in India, where class, caste, gender, geographical location, beliefs, values, schools and infrastructure are only some of the elements that influence the digital culture of the youth. India has the largest youth population in the world, with approximately 600 million people under the age of 25. The strong cultural divides in India heavily influence the life experiences of young people. Pathak-Shelat and DeShano (2013) examined how location and dominant discourses intersect with digital technologies and reconfigure aspects of youths' daily lives, such as study, leisure and friendship, how youths negotiate their interactions with digital media as one aspect of their real life, and how these negotiations influence cultural practices within social environments. In this study, youths were found to treat new media and technologies as one component of their lives and social experiences.

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The intermediate layer of culture

The intermediate layer of culture consists of activities as manifestations of culture. According to Dodd (1998), cultural activities can be expressed in many ways: as technology, material objects, roles, rules, rituals, customs, communication patterns and artistic expressions. The rituals and customs people observe and the festivals people celebrate reflect culture. For example, the celebration of King's Day (Koningsdag, King's or Queen's day) in the Netherlands on 30 April every year reinforces the belief that the Dutch King or Queen is an embodiment of hope and unity in times of war, adversity and natural disaster. In a different arena, the power of football (soccer) in many countries, starting in Europe and South America

and symbolizing a core value of pride in the nation, is astonishing. One only needs to look at the TV viewing parties and celebrations around the Football World Cup to understand that.

Artworks are cultural products. In many paintings by Western artists, humans tend to be portrayed as the focal point, whereas in paintings produced by Eastern artists (such as those of the Chinese), natural scenes or animals are more likely to be the centre of the painting. This reflects the importance and power of nature in the Chinese culture versus the power of human agency and action in Western European and American culture. In addition to artwork, technology is a very salient feature of a culture, and is reflected in its transportation, communication, food, clothing, shelter and tools. What people wear, how they eat and prepare food, the kinds of tools they use for work – all these reflect the culture of a particular group. As Everett Rogers (1995) states, technology has form (what it is or how it looks), function (what it does and how it works) and meaning (what it represents).

What we do in a cultural context forms relationships with others; these relationships generate a dynamic of roles and expectations. The behavioural norms associated with these roles and expectations are governed by culture. As well as roles, rules, norms, customs and rituals, each culture expects particular communication patterns. Communication behaviours such as gestures, loudness, directness and turn-taking are all expected to conform to a culture's expectations. In this, the contrasts between cultures are striking. For example, Ghanaian culture dictates that people address elderly men as 'grandfather'. In Australia, Indigenous people call elders 'uncle' or 'auntie' to show respect. In Japan, indirectness in conversation is valued as it functions to preserve harmony between the speakers, whereas in Germany directly 'speaking your mind' is preferred in interpersonal communication. In Iran, people often belittle their own achievements in public in order to appear humble, which is valued in Iranian culture. Intercultural misunderstandings often occur because we do not share the cultural rules governing the communication behaviour of others.

PHOTO 2.2 A colourful array of spices in the Deira Spice Souq in Dubai.

Nonverbal communication behaviour such as posture and gestures and concepts of time and space are

also influenced by culture. In Western countries, people view time with great precision, and punctuality is a cultural expectation. People make an appointment or reservation to see a doctor, go to a hairdresser or dine in a restaurant. Being late is regarded as bad manners. For example, the Dutch and Germans are very punctual, and being even five minutes late for an appointment is considered inappropriate – if anything, people arrive a minute or two early as a sign of respect. In Africa, Malaysia and Latin America, however, people are deliberately a little late in order not to disturb their hosts' other activities. Meetings may not start until everyone arrives. A doctor may schedule all patients for the 8:00am appointment, and it is the patients' responsibility to negotiate among themselves whose turn it is to see the doctor. There are core cultural values in both these time orientations, and people with one orientation tend to think those with the other are lazy and disrespectful or over-punctual and obsessive. Both culture and communication, therefore, are a way of living and a whole social process. The intermediate level of culture reflects our definitions of social and cultural rules, and our communication patterns.

DO IT!

Watch an old movie from your grandmother's time. Identify the roles of the main male characters portrayed in the movie. Watch a movie from the last few years with a similar theme (e.g., romantic love or war) and identify the roles of the main male characters in this movie. Compare the roles in the two movies. Have the roles of men changed over time? If so, in what ways? What does this tell us about cultural change?

The outer layer of culture

The outer layer of culture involves the institutions of a culture (Dodd, 1998). Institutions constitute the formalized systems, including religion, the economy, politics, family, healthcare and education. These systems are the products of culture. Religion refers to any system of thought that provides answers to the big questions of life, death and life beyond death. Religion supplies maps for individuals on their journeys towards belief and faith. For example, the 'Abrahamic' faiths (Judaism, Islam and Christianity) are called monotheistic religions, meaning that each believes in only one God. Hindus tend to be both monotheistic and polytheistic. Buddhism, on the other hand, offers the possibility for personal self-realization, and the Buddha is considered a teacher, not a God. Aboriginal people in Australia have a spirituality that puts value on integrated communities, based on beliefs about connections between people and the environment, including the land and animals. In modern societies, religion is sometimes used to explain events in life, including death, accidents, illness

and even natural disasters. In this sense, religion and culture are intertwined. Knowledge of religious practice can help one to understand a particular culture, and to avoid cultural mistakes and prejudice.

In addition to religious systems, the economic system of a society reflects its culture. In some remote villages, people still use barter trade for business transactions, whereas in more developed regions, people are more likely to use cash or credit cards to make a purchase. With the advent of communication technologies, digital currency or electronic money is replacing credit/debit cards and cash in physical form, such as banknotes and coins. Like traditional money, digital currency may be used to purchase goods and services, although there might be some restrictions depending on the country. For example, in 2011, Google wallet was released in the US to make it easy to carry credit/debit cards on one's mobile phone. The Danish Chamber of Commerce supports the move to a cashless economy. Nearly one-third of the Danish population uses MobilePay, a smart phone application for transferring money.

At the outer layer, cultural influences are reflected in family structure. Take family size, for example. In Western countries, the nuclear family (a unit referring to the father, mother and children) is the major family structure. In other cultures, the extended family, which includes the nuclear family along with grandparents, uncles and aunts, cousins and so on, is valued and more likely to be the norm. This structure can affect the number of children in a family in any generation. Moreover, political, health and educational systems are also elements of culture, and they vary across cultures. For example, some countries have a one-party system (e.g., communist regimes), whereas others have two or more parties (e.g., democratic regimes) governing the country. In some cultures, religion and politics are separate, whereas in other cultures they are interrelated – the religious leader may also be a political figure. For example, the Roman Catholic Pope, as the leader of his church, has full legal, executive and judicial power in its seat, the Vatican City. On the one hand, religion offers the possibility of peace and unites people. On the other, religion can play a divisive role when different ethnic groups or nations struggle over resources. In addition, people's beliefs about health and medicine are shaped by culture. Some societies rely on Western medicine to cure illness; others have more faith in traditional herbal medicine; and still others believe that praying is a way to relieve pain and illness. Furthermore, a society's educational system also reflects its culture. In Malaysia, Singapore or Hong Kong, memorization or rote learning is the preferred pedagogy, whereas in Anglo-Saxon cultures, the skills of critical and creative thinking and problem solving are more valued in the classroom. The outer layer of cultural systems includes numerous aspects of a culture's ultimate survival in ways that are accepted and often sanctioned by law. They are fundamental to the economic, legal, social and spiritual nature of a culture (Dodd, 1998).

Characteristics of culture

Culture is holistic. To this point, we have isolated the components of culture, for ease of description and explanation. In reality, culture functions as an integrated and complex whole. While the various parts of culture are interrelated, the whole is more than simply the sum of these interconnected parts (McDaniel and Samovar, 2015). As Hall (1977: 13–14) said, 'You touch a culture in one place and everything else is affected'. For example, during the Hindu Annaprasanam, a festive event to celebrate the first birthday of a child, the baby is given a mixture of rice, sugar and milk, which is generally his or her first solid food after a year on a liquid diet. All aspects of the event must be interpreted as a whole – none makes sense on its own. Another example of culture as a whole is the ritual of drinking tea. The custom of tea drinking can symbolize culture, from which different values and cultural orientations can be learned. One very specific example is the Japanese tea ritual. Chadō, or the 'Way of Tea', is a key part of Japanese culture. The tea ritual is a detailed procedure, which takes years to learn and which can take up to four hours to perform. The aim of the tea ceremony is to achieve inner peace and harmony, which are valued in Japanese culture. It also aims to open the mind in preparation for meditation. Thus, the tea ritual must be interpreted as an integral part of the whole Japanese cultural system.

Culture is learned. The Dutch psychologist and sociologist Geert Hofstede (1991: 32) writes that every person 'carries within him or herself patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting which were learned throughout his or her lifetime'. We learn cultural rules as we grow up from sources like family, friends, teachers, proverbs, adages and folk-tales. We learn our cultural rules and norms through communication, at both the conscious and unconscious levels. A Chinese mother might tell her daughter that once married, she should follow her mother-in-law's ways of doing things around the house, and in doing so the daughter learns about the expected roles of a married woman. This is cultural learning at a conscious level. Identifying cultural learning at the unconscious level is more difficult, but just as significant nevertheless. While we may be unable to specify a particular experience that taught us about our view of ageing, for example, the attitudes we have developed are still the product of our cultural learning. As an example, the French convention of addressing older relatives with the formal pronoun for 'you' – 'vous', whereas younger relatives are called by the more informal and intimate 'tu', reinforces the value of respect for older people that is central to this culture, even with the changes of modern life. Culture is pervasive; it is like the water that fish swim in and the air we breathe (Beamer and Varner, 2008). Often we are not able to see their effects on our lives until we encounter different cultural rules or practices.

Culture is dynamic. Culture is subject to change over time. When different cultures are in contact, cultural change may occur. For example, think of how Russian culture has been

changing over the past few years – many aspects of its culture have noticeably changed since the collapse of communism in 1991. A new cultural and political order, economic recovery, growth, and increasing openness to Western ideas have led many to see present-day Russia as more 'individualistic' and 'Western'. As our cultural environment changes, so does our view of cultural practices. The waltz was considered as savage during the 1700s. During the 1800s, the tango was viewed as a primitive dance that was too sexual to be socially acceptable. In fact, it was banned in Argentina. Today, the tango is very popular all over the world, even in places far from its origins, such as Finland. Similarly, in the United States, rock and roll was decried by many people as being too sexual in the 1950s and the 1960s, which caused considerable intergenerational conflict. Nowadays, the waltz, the tango and the music and dance associated with rock and roll are accepted as part of our social life. However, we also need to be aware that different elements of culture or different layers of culture may not change at the same speed or at the same time. While technology, transport systems, material objects and architecture are becoming increasingly similar across different cultures, our beliefs, values and worldviews – the inner core of culture – can prove more resistant to change. An American may wear the traditional costume of an Indian woman, but their beliefs, values or worldviews may still differ considerably. We could build a city in Africa similar in appearance to London, but it would still not be London.

Culture is ethnocentric. The term ethnocentrism refers to the belief that one's own culture is superior to other cultures (see Chapter 4). Anthropologists generally agree that ethnocentrism is found in every culture (McDaniel and Samovar, 2015). Ethnocentrism builds fences between cultures and thus creates barriers for intercultural communication. How we view a culture invariably affects how we interact with people from that culture. When Captain James Cook arrived in Hawaii in 1778, he described the native culture as being savage, animal-like and heathen, comparing (unfavourably) the practices of the Hawaiian people to the European culture of which he was a part. Today, we know that no culture is superior to any other, but simply that some cultural practices might appear strange or inappropriate to members of other cultures. Australians think it is cruel that Koreans eat dog meat; Koreans feel it is heartless that Australians and other Anglo-Saxons send their elderly parents to nursing homes. Similarly, people in Sweden think Anglo-Saxons are cruel for spanking their children, but many Anglo-Saxons think that corporal punishment is central to bringing up a child properly. Of course, we do not have to accept or practise what is acceptable in other cultures. What is important is recognizing and respecting the differences. Culture is what is distinctive about the way of life of

a people, community, nation or social group. This implies that no culture is inherently superior to any other.

THEORY CORNER

EMIC AND ETIC APPROACHES

There are two main approaches to studying culture: emic and etic. They were first described by Kenneth Pike (1967) and the terms originally came from the field of linguistics. The *emic approach* views each culture as a unique entity that can only be examined by constructs developed from inside the culture. In other words, this approach focuses on identifying culture-specific aspects of concepts and behaviour that cannot be compared across all cultures. Emic knowledge and interpretations are those existing within a culture, that are shaped by local customs, values, meanings and beliefs, and are best described by a 'native' or an 'insider' of a culture. The cultural anthropologists' endeavour to understand culture form 'the native's point of view' is the main foundation of emic approach.

In contrast, the *etic approach* assumes that culture can be examined with predetermined categories that can be applied to all cultures in the search for cultural universals. Etic researchers attempt to identify universal aspects of human behaviour and seek to find universal processes that can be utilized across cultures. In other words, this approach assumes that all cultures can be compared in terms of generalizable phenomena, and that researchers should seek to segregate common components of culture and test hypotheses. A synthesis of etic and emic approaches can be found in Lung-Tan Lu's (2012) paper. Lu found that found that one of the most difficult aspects of doing business in a foreign country is to understand the similarities and differences in cultural values. Cross-cultural studies using an etic approach with quantitative methods have led researchers to compare similar elements (etic) of national cultures around the world. However, critics argue that it is time to explore the relationship between different parts of culture (emic) and international business activities because people living in a country are not homogeneous. While etic categories may be useful for comparative analysis, they need corroboration from fieldwork and must allow for new elements collected through an emic approach.

(Continued)

Hence, etic and emic approaches are complementary, and researchers should combine both approaches in studying culture.

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DO IT!

Some cultures (or aspects of culture) transcend national and ethnic boundaries. One example in contemporary society is consumer culture, or the value put on buying and using products and services. One way to explore the concept of consumer culture is to find out when and why people make purchases of goods and services. Ask your family members what they shop for and why, and what they like to consume. You may also ask whether they always need what they buy. Relate their answers to etic and emic approaches. Think about what aspects of consumer culture each approach allows you to see. Write a paragraph summarizing your views.

CULTURES WITHIN CULTURE

Within any dominant culture, there are cultures within culture, which are referred to as *subcultures* or co-cultures (this chapter uses the term 'subculture'). Subcultures can be categorized using a number of indicators, including gender, ethnicity, religion, profession, social class, organization and geographic region. We focus on four types of subcultures, defined as ethnicity, social class, organization and geographic region. Subcultures, like cultures, give their members identity, and members of a subcultural group can mark their identity through rituals, language and other behaviour.

Ethnic culture

Ethnicity is frequently the basis of a subculture that people use to categorize immigrants. Ethnic groups are identifiable groups of people who have a common heritage and cultural tradition passed on through generations. Examples include Chinese Australians, Mexican Americans, Vietnamese Italians, and Greek New Zealanders. Some people use the terms 'racial group' and 'ethnic group' interchangeably; others differentiate the two terms by specifying that racial groups emphasize the genetically transmitted traits of physical appearance (Dodd, 1998). It is important to note that racial group boundaries are very fluid and blurred, and very few people today (if any) belong to only one racial group. Therefore, many people resist the use of the term 'race' altogether, preferring a term like 'ethnic or cultural group'.

PHOTO 2.3 Slovene Hall in Fontana, near Los Angeles, offers Slovene music, dance and food to its visitors.

Ethnic groups in the host country are often referred to as minority groups, even though they may be the numerical majority, such as blacks in South Africa. An example of the complexity of belonging to ethnic groups comes from Latin America. There is a notion of 'Latina/o' (or Latinx), which is a pan-ethnic identity label used by scholars and some grassroots activists to describe people from a variety of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds but who are of Mexican, Latin American and Spanish Caribbean descent and living in the United States. 'Chicana/o' is a political grassroots identity label used to describe people of Mexican descent and is most widely used in California. Analogous groups and identities exist in most countries today, but people's preferences vary by culture. The term 'minority' is sometimes associated with disadvantage and lower social status. The Sami people in Scandinavia, for example, have long been an economically and socially disadvantaged indigenous minority in the relatively (but not completely) homogeneous cultures of Sweden, Norway and Finland. Communication between people from an ethnic minority and those from the ethnic majority can be problematic, due to language and cultural barriers as well as negative stereotypes (see Chapter 4).

Social class culture

Socioeconomic status (SES) can be the basis for a subculture. SES can be derived from a person's income, education, occupation, residential area and family background. For example, your income is strongly associated with where you are most likely to reside, the type of occupation you have and the position you hold, the brand of clothes you wear, the kind of people you tend to associate with, whom you marry or which school your children attend. The Indian caste system is an example of a hierarchically ordered social class ranking. Class ranking predicts attitudes and communication between different castes within the larger Indian culture. Similarly, previous research in Western countries has found differences between middle-class and working-class parents in regard to the values placed on raising their children (Zhou, 2014). Liu (2015) argues that working-class parents' emphasis on obedience can transfer to their children as obedience to authority, acceptance of what other people think and hesitancy in expressing desires to authority figures outside the home. Research also shows that due to the social stereotypes favouring whites in the West, it is common for blacks to be perceived as being lower class and even less intelligent, despite their actual middle-class status (Hendrix, 2017).

Organizational culture

Subcultures also include organizational cultures. Each organization has its ways of doing things and its ways of communicating, which together constitute its organizational culture (Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). Employees hold beliefs, values and assumptions to organize their behaviour and interpret their experience. Through communication, these beliefs and values develop into organizationally based understanding and shared interpretations of organizational reality. These expectations and meanings form the framework of organizational culture. The IBM Corporation, for example, has a distinctive organizational culture in which male employees are expected to wear dark blue suits, white shirts and conservative neckties. The dress code reflects unity and conformity to IBM's management style. On the other hand, innovativeness is an espoused value of the 3M Corporation. Employees who put forward suggestions become heroes for demonstrating the spirit of innovation. In Japanese companies, employee loyalty is highly valued, whereas opportunities for career advancement may be seen as being more important in Western organizations. In some organizations, subordinates can address people in management by their first name; in other organizations, employees of lower rank must address senior-level managers by their last name and their title. Even subsidiaries of the same company operating in different countries may report

value differences. Members of each organization share knowledge about appropriate behaviours and use this knowledge to guide their activities at work. Organizational cultures give members a sense of identity.

Organizational culture can be a strong determinant of attitudes to organizational and cultural change (see Chapter 6 for Hofstede's cultural dimensions). For example, employees in a large hospital in Australia undergoing job change and physical relocation were classified by organizational level, from the CEO to the cleaning and grounds staff (Rooney et al., 2010). Their attitudes to the change were strongly influenced by their level, with those at the higher levels being more positive about the change, which modernized the hospital organization, and less concerned about the physical move. It emerged that for lower level workers, the location of the hospital and the actual buildings were central to their identity, as their families had been employed in this place for several generations.

Regional culture

Geographic region is also a basis for categorizing people into different cultural groups. Regional differences often imply differences in social attitudes, lifestyle, food preferences and communication. People from rural areas are different from people in urban areas. The Dutch, in addition to the regions within the Netherlands but outside Holland (such as Friesland) that have their own languages and cultures, distinguish between two major cultural urban/rural subdivisions in their nation. The most important distinction is between the Randstad (Rim City) and non-Randstad cultures. Randstad culture is distinctively urban, located in the provinces of North Holland, South Holland and Utrecht. The non-Randstad culture follows the historical divide between the predominantly Protestant north and the Catholic south. Interpersonal relationships may seem tighter in rural communities than in urban regions, partly due to apartment living and busy lifestyles in urban environments.

Language or regional dialects are also markers of regional cultures. For example, the Swedish language has been standardized for more than a century, but regional variations in pronunciation between urban areas and rural ones persist. Similarly, the Japanese language spoken in Okinawa, for example, differs from the Japanese spoken in Tokyo, and the Mandarin spoken in Beijing is different from the Mandarin spoken in Shanghai. Likewise, the American English spoken in Virginia is different from that spoken in Ohio (much less the English spoken in London, Sydney or Singapore).

DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Members of a particular cultural group have collective representations of the defining characteristics of their culture. As they interact with each other to establish consensual meanings of their shared experiences, they come to agree on what is important to their culture. Such collective agreements become shared knowledge, developed through the negotiation of meaning at both the individual and collective levels. While cultural differences cannot be reduced to differences in cognitive content (Markus and Kitayama, 1991), they are ingrained in an individual's sense of being. Therefore, any deviance from a social or cultural norm in the group can lead to a stigmatized identity.

Identity is a product of social construction. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1969), Erving Goffman proposes that identity is a theatrical performance that conveys the self to others in the best possible light, in conformity to cultural and societal norms. However, critics argue that Goffman's dramaturgical perspective over-extends the notion of acting or performing and gives an undue concern to impression management, which might cast doubt on any notion of a true self (Elliott, 2001). Despite the criticisms, Goffman's influential model of self-presentation offers insights into the discursive construction of identity (identity construction through talk and discourse) and the social presentation of self.

One important method of self-presentation is through identification with a cultural group. Cultural identity implies that a person shares a worldview, value system, and attitudes and beliefs with their cultural group. In this sense, cultural identity both locates a person in a cultural group and distinguishes the person from others who are in other groups. When an individual calls himself or herself a Chinese, an African, a Buddhist, a woman or Blake Smith, that person is presenting parts of their self-image that are recognizable to others. For example, the Chinese view the self as a relational concept that is embedded in the social presence of others. The ultimate goal of life is to realize the self through developing harmonious social relationships with others (Chen, 2017).

Identity representation is shaped by social interaction (Hecht et al., 2005). From the social constructionist's perspective, people use linguistic and other cultural resources in the ongoing construction and reconstruction of personal and group identity. Smith (2007) argues that constructing an ethnic identity provides immigrants with a sense of belonging and continuity with their home culture. Although there has been very little consensus among scholars regarding a universally accepted definition of 'identity' due to its complex and multifaceted nature, common to all conceptions of identity is that it is socially constructed through communication and is a pivotal point connecting individuals with the society.

THEORY CORNER

ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography refers to a specific research methodology that has been employed to study different cultures and subcultures. According to Grbich (2007: 40), this approach has 'strong links with the anthropological tradition of observation of culture *in situ*'. Ethnographic research aims to describe the whole culture. This will usually involve participation for several years in the setting, learning the language and collecting data. Many ethnographers today spend a shorter time in the field but use a number of data collection techniques to speed up the process of data collection. These include focus groups, face-to-face interviewing, participant observation and document analysis. Data gathered from ethnographic studies often cast light on our understanding of the life and culture of particular communities.

In her book on restaurants, Gatta (2002) combines interviews and several months of participant observation in a variety of restaurant spaces, from fast food to expensive restaurants. Her goal is to look at the strategies used by servers to negotiate their emotions when confronted with rude and demanding customers, as well as their dealings with managers and co-workers. Thus, Gatta believes that restaurants provide a stage to explore how workers attempt to maintain, lose and regain emotional balance amid these potentially disturbing situations. She carefully observed and listened to mostly waitresses and their stories. She claims that there are different strategies used by servers, which can be inward-directed or outward-directed, active or passive. They range from spitting in a customer's food (relatively rare) to withdrawing friendly service, stealing food or alcohol from their restaurants, re-engaging in routines that allow one to forget a particular incident, or engaging in various stress-management techniques outside work, such as excessive drinking and yoga (some techniques are more effective than others). From her ethnography research in restaurants, Gatta provides a sense of the daily culture of servers, their coping strategies, and the ways that they create a sense of community in response to the challenges posed by the job.

REFERENCES

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Grbich, Carol (2007) *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction*. London: Sage.

SUMMARY

- It is difficult to have a concrete definition of culture because the characteristics that we use to denote cultural differences are not universally applicable.
- Culture is defined as the particular way of life of a group of people. Culture is developed, manifested, shared and maintained through communication.
- Subcultures can be defined by ethnicity, social class, organization and geographic region. Subcultures share similar characteristics of the larger culture.
- Culture and identity are discursively constructed and socially defined. Identification with a cultural group gives us a sense of identity.
- Both emic and etic approaches help us in studying cultures from within and from outside a system. We can achieve greater knowledge and awareness of the issues of cultural expression, creativity and art through interdisciplinary thinking about culture.

JOIN THE DEBATE

ARE WE WHAT WE EAT?

It is often said 'We are what we eat'. Food, cooking and eating habits constitute an integral part of every culture. The consumption of food is more than a purely biological activity; it is always imbued with meaning. Food choices, eating habits and cooking are expressions of culture and cultural identity. Food is also an important part of religion, separating one creed from another by means of dietary taboos. The techniques utilized to prepare food and the ways of consuming it have an important influence on social and familial relationships. Fast-food like KFC, for example, does not encourage people to spend the whole evening with friends or family members over a meal at home or in a restaurant, which is a favourite social activity for continental Europeans. Thus, people who eat different foods, or eat the same foods in different ways, are often thought to be different. However, along with globalization, multinational food companies like Starbucks and Pizza Hut have been expanding their presence around the world. Do you think this change is a good or a bad thing? With the increasing variety of cuisines from different cultures readily available, and with our gradual acquisition of culturally diverse foods, will we gradually assimilate different cultures, cultural values and cultural identity? Or will our food just become more Westernized? What will be the impact on our original cultures? Will we become increasingly similar as we eat more similar foods in similar ways?

CASE STUDY

FOOD CULTURE IN CHINA

Food and cuisine constitute an important part of Chinese culture. Dining goes far beyond meeting the biological needs to satisfy hunger; food and eating, including what to eat, how to eat and when to eat (or not to eat), can be inextricably linked with culture. There are many Chinese idioms that are associated with the act of eating. For example, someone who is popular at work is called 'eat open'; on the other hand, those who are unpopular among colleagues are described as 'eat closed'. If you visit someone who happens to be not at home or are denied entrance, it is called 'eat closed door'. 'Eat loss' is used to describe someone who is in a disadvantaged position, whereas 'eat sweetness' describes someone who gains benefits from an event or situation. Those who undergo hardships are referred to as people who 'eat bitterness' – the list goes on. Food reflects customs, social norms, festivals, status, religion, beliefs and rituals; above all, it is a common language that bonds the Chinese people together. The Chinese saying that 'To the people, food is heaven' (*min yi shi wei tian*) dates back thousands of years. For the Chinese people, food is viewed as heavenly; eating communicates their desire for harmony between human beings and nature, harmony between heaven and earth, and harmony in social relationships.

The history of Chinese cuisine is marked by both variety and change. Preferences for seasoning and cooking techniques vary across provinces because of the geographical features of the region, the climate and social customs. Moreover, due to imperial influence and trading, ingredients and cooking methods from other cultures have been integrated into Chinese cuisines over time. The 'Silk Road' is the conventional term for the routes through Central Asia that linked the Iranian plateau with western China. Along this trade route passed exotic foods that expanded Chinese cuisines, although only some of them preserved their foreign names. All of them became locally grown and consumed over the course of history. For example, it is thought that sesame, peas, onions, coriander and cucumber were all introduced into China from the West as early as the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD), although the accuracy of this could be challenged. In addition, rice is a staple food across regions. Chinese food is mostly eaten with chopsticks, which are also believed to have been introduced in the Han Dynasty, along with the wok, a characteristic Chinese cooking utensil.

Chinese cuisines are conventionally categorized into eight groups based on geography, cooking techniques and taste (see Table 2.1).

TABLE 2.1 Summary of eight Chinese cuisines

Cuisine	Geographic region	Characteristic taste
Cantonese cuisine (粵菜)	Guangdong Province and Hong Kong	Mild flavour, lightly seasoned, and a little sweet (e.g., dry-fried beef and noodles)
Sichuan cuisine (粵菜)	Sichuan Province	Spicy, often mouth-numbing, with lots of chili (e.g., chili fish-flavoured beef shreds)
Jiangsu cuisine (粵菜)	Jiangsu Province	Fresh, moderately salty and sweet (e.g., sweet and sour Mandarin fish).
Zhejiang cuisine (浙菜)	Zhejiang Province	Similar to Jiangsu cuisine (e.g., West Lake fish in vinegar gravy)
Fujian/Min cuisine (闽菜)	Fujian Province	Light spicy, with a mild sweet and sour taste (e.g., Buddha jumping wall – sea food and poultry casserole)
Hunan cuisine (湘菜)	Hunan Province	Quite spicy, even hotter than Sichuan food (e.g., steamed fish head with diced spicy red peppers)
Anhui cuisine (徽菜)	Anhui Province	A delicate lightness in taste, with herbs adding aroma and medicinal effects (e.g., ham and whippy bamboo stew)
Shandong cuisine (鲁菜)	Shandong Province and northern part of China	Salty and crispy, with less heavily applied chili than in Sichuan cuisine (e.g., diced pork cooked in a pot)

Food in China has many symbolic meanings. When a baby is born, the parents distribute eggs dyed in a red colour to relatives, friends and neighbours to celebrate. Eggs symbolize the continuity of life, and eating eggs implies Chinese people's desire to pass family names from generation to generation. Dumplings are served on Chinese lunar New Year's Eve (which often falls between the end of January and early February) to symbolize family reunions and togetherness. Although abundant dishes are served at the New Year's Eve dinner, what people actually eat is secondary to the significance of being together with the family. Oranges mean good luck, and they are used as decorations at the New Year. On Lantern Festival Day (the fifteenth day of the lunar new year), glutinous rice balls

are eaten to indicate that all family members stick together. When celebrating birthdays in China, often noodles and boiled eggs are served. Noodles symbolize longevity and eggs, and on this occasion represent one's smooth life. On wedding days, people tend to spread the couple's bed with dates (which in Chinese is pronounced in the same way as the word for 'early') and peanuts (pronounced in the same way as the word for 'birth'), in the hope that the couple can have children soon. At the time of their wedding and moving into a new house, the couple may eat noodles with gravy, which symbolizes a flavoured life (Zhang and Ma, 2016). There are also food taboos. For example, people do not like to share pears, because dividing a pear means separation.

Food in China has social functions as it establishes and maintains relationships between people. In Western cultures, it is common for individuals sitting at the same table to order separate food; in China, a group dining together usually shares the food. When Chinese people gather together in a restaurant, people sit at a round table, which symbolizes unity, courtesy and an atmosphere of sharing. Dishes are placed in the middle of the table. People pour drinks into each other's glass, asking each other to eat more, reflecting mutual care and respect. The food *per se* is less important than the social significance of sharing. Dining together is a medium for making new friends or maintaining established relationships. In Hong Kong, a common parting expression is 'we will dine together when we have time'. People talk about business and exchange information over morning or afternoon tea (Ma, 2015).

In Chinese food culture, certain etiquettes are observed while eating. Family members usually wait to eat until the whole family is seated. The elders and the young are the first served, although habits vary in different regions. In some parts of China, for example, the whole family eat together; in others, men and women may eat separately. When taking food from the dishes, the rule is that you should take food first from the plates in front of you, rather than from those in front of others. It is also considered bad manners to use chopsticks to burrow through the food. When finding your favorite dish, you should not gobble it up as quickly as possible or put the plate in front of yourself. You should consider others at the table. If there is not much left on a plate and you want to finish it, you should usually ask if anyone at the table wants more from that plate – if not, then you may finish it.

In terms of presenting food, fish or meat can be served with bones in Chinese dishes. When removing bones or other inedible parts of the food from your

mouth, you should use chopsticks or a hand to take them and put them on a side plate in front of you. The Chinese eat with chopsticks; spoons are often used for soup or sometimes for dessert. There are some conventions governing the use of chopsticks. For example, you should not put chopsticks vertically into your food when you are not using them, especially not into rice. Such a gesture will make Chinese people think of funerals, because at funerals sticks of incense are stuck into a rice pot at the ancestor altar. Knives are traditionally seen as breakers of harmony, so they are normally not provided at the table.

REFERENCES FOR CASE STUDY

Ma, Guansheng (2015) 'Food, eating behaviour, and culture in Chinese society', *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 2: 195–199.

Zhang, Na and Ma, Guansheng (2016) 'Noodles, traditionally and today', *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 3: 209–212.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Have you tasted any of the eight Chinese cuisines listed in Table 2.1? If yes, which cuisine is your favourite? If not, which one would be your favourite and why?
2. Think of a traditional food in your culture that is eaten on a particular occasion, such as a birthday or a wedding. What kind of food is it? What symbolic meaning does it convey?
3. In your culture, do people normally eat with chopsticks, forks and knives, or hands? Why do you think they do this?
4. Are there any food taboos in your culture, for example certain foods that should not be served at weddings?
5. Can you give an example from your country to show how food is related to your culture?

FURTHER READINGS

Aoki, Kayoko (2012) 'Name and ethnic identity: Experiences of Korean women in Japan', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 47(4): 377–391.

This paper explores the experiences of Zainichi Korean women and examines how using Japanese or Korean names has impacted their identity. Koreans living in Japan, so-called Zainichi Koreans, were historically forced to use Japanese names during the annexation (1910–45) and have been using them until today. While most Zainichi Koreans use Japanese names in public, some use Korean names all the time or only when they associate with fellow Zainichi Koreans. Zainichi Korean women have been marginalized not only by the dominant group, the ethnic Japanese, but also by their own group.

García-Gómez, Antonio (2017) 'Teen girls and sexual agency: Exploring the intrapersonal and intergroup dimensions of sexting', *Media, Culture, and Society*, 39(3): 391–407.

The electronic swapping of sexually provocative images and texts, commonly known as sexting, seems to have become part and parcel of adolescents' social lives. Questions remain about the way(s) young women navigate sexual relationships and construct their gendered identity discursively by endorsing or challenging social and behavioural norms of sexual agency. This article reports on a study where guided discussions involving 36 young women were conducted. The main of aim of this study was to gain insight into the characteristics of sexualized adolescent cyber-culture by analysing their discourses about sexting, its effects on their lives and its implications.

Hochschild, Arlie R. (2016) *Strangers in Their Own Land*. New York: New Press.

The book explains the worldview of the supporters of the Tea Party movement in Louisiana, in the United States. Hochschild claims that both conservative and liberals have 'deep stories' about who they are and what their values are. Deep stories are the stories we tell ourselves to capture our hopes, pride, disappointments, fears and anxieties. Their deep story, she argues, focus on the American Dream: the idea that if you work hard and play by the rules you can have a better life. But what happens when that dream does not come true – or when people see 'line cutters' getting ahead while their own lives do not seem to be going anywhere?

Ossman, Susan (2013) *Moving Matters: Paths of Serial Cultural Migration*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

This book is a rich portrait of a culture of serial migrants: people who have lived in several countries, calling each one at some point 'home'. Serial migrants must

negotiate a world of territorial borders and legal restrictions and they create their own culture. They often become masters of settlement as they turn each country into a life chapter. Ossman follows this diverse and growing population not only to understand how they produce certain cultures, but also to illuminate an ongoing tension between global fluidity and the power of nation-states.

Ruelle, Olivier and Peverelli, Peter (2017) 'The discursive construction of identity through interaction on social media in a Chinese NGO', *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 10(1): 12–37.

This article adopts the social constructionist theory approach to investigate the discursive construction of social identity in a Chinese NGO through analysing online discussions on WeChat, which is China's fastest-growing social networking site. Data were collected from ongoing interactions in a group on WeChat over a period of eight months. The findings revealed the way in which key members of a Chinese NGO are engaged in a process of group identity construction.

SAGE VIDEO SOURCES

In this video, Dr Nick Bentley speaks about characteristics of subcultures. This video will help you to achieve the learning objective of analyzing different types of subcultures. Watch it to learn how Dr Bentley defines and describes subcultures.

This video is available at http://study.sagepub.com/liu3e