

TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE PERSPECTIVE FOR INTERCULTURAL
COMMUNICATION STUDY: DIRECTIONS FOR IAICS*

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ABSTRACT

Intercultural communication is a broad and challenging area of study primarily because it represents the confluence of so many different disciplines of traditional study, forces us into the gaps that separate these diverse disciplines, and pushes us into the somewhat a-theoretical world of nearly chaotic change with some very fuzzy concepts. Theories about intercultural communication tend to originate within one or another of the more traditional disciplines and typically suffer the consequences of a narrowed perspective. Whereas these positions are useful for certain purposes, they often fail to provide a broad base for the synthesis of such varied areas as represented by the International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies (IAICS). Thus, the purpose of this paper is to provide a comprehensive perspective about intercultural communication study that integrates more limited approaches and builds around the shared dimensions of human behavior. This expanded position will emphasize six primary and interdependent dimensions of human behavior: physicality, personality, sociality, politicality, symbolcity, and spirituality. After setting some general guidelines for this paradigm, separate sections will explain each of the six dimensions and identify distinctive contributions for each. A final section will project the utility of this comprehensive perspective for the future of intercultural communication study within IAICS.

Introduction

During a graduate seminar several years ago, the senior author was pressed, if not pushed, by his students to generate a broad-based framework for the integration of diverse perspectives about intercultural relations. Shared or universal features of homo sapiens became the point of departure. Every human being, he reasoned, is minimally a physical entity with a psychological, social, and political orientation. Facilitating the interaction of these major components and the application of them in real contexts is the

symbol-using capability. The students wrestled with this interdependent set of systems and added a more ethereal sixth dimension of spirituality. Because of the widely diverse, if not infinite, manifestations and permutations of these six sub-systems, we decided that this paradigm was probably too broad to serve as more than a general category system. Subsequently, a few of the seminar participants have played with the potential of this general system, but until now little more than the general categories has resulted. Two years ago, mention of this perspective was offered to the junior author who was an undergraduate student of intercultural communication. He wanted to advance this position with emphasis on spirituality as it works with symbolicity to integrate the parts. This renewed interest compelled both of the authors to reconsider the potential of this broad perspective. With renewed incentive they found its potential as an organizational schema that can provide a perspective for integrating diverse traditional disciplinary approaches to the study of intercultural communication.

The recurring suffix for all six dimensions is more than coincidence. The suffix “-ity” is typically “used to form abstract nouns expressing state or condition” (Random House Dictionary, 1966). For each of these categories we are identifying a state or condition and the tendencies of an individual to demonstrate what is involved in this dimension. Thus we identified (1) physicality, (2) personality, (3) sociality, (4) politicality, (5) symbolicity, and (6) spirituality. These features generally categorize the most prominent aspects of homo sapiens and even more loosely identify areas of study within the scholarly community that study these aspects. One problem that this reconceptualization was intended to correct was the somewhat random growth of traditional disciplines that study one or more of these dimensions. Sociology, for

example, studies aspects of behavior at least embraced by sociality and politicality with occasional forays into symbolicity and spirituality. Likewise, psychology and political science treat varied aspects, but the specialists within those disciplines often work in isolation from specialists in other areas. One of the attractive features of intercultural communication study is the necessary interaction of scholars from all disciplines. An outgrowth of this paper should be a roadmap that can help us coordinate and synthesize the results of our study more effectively. In no way should this paper be interpreted as an indictment or denigration of anyone's scholarship. That is certainly not the intent. Instead, we are proposing an alternative schema for integrating this wide diversity according to some universal categories less burdened by academic constraints.

If all six of these dimensions are represented in each of us as states, conditions, and tendencies with infinite permutations, then we need some sort of model that can pull them together. In earlier work about leadership (Cf. Hill, 1999), the senior author located such an analogy with Chinese fretted balls. Using this model the six dimensions are related to a ball within a ball with physicality at the center and other more encompassing balls up to spirituality that becomes indistinguishable from the outer context within which each of us resides and which works with symbolicity to facilitate the expression of the other dimensions. Imagine for a moment these fretted balls and their parallel dimensions within the human being. Each ball is relatively independent, but exists as interrelated with the other balls. For example, we can certainly study the physiology of the human being, but in terms of interaction with other people these physical qualities become important as they impact on one's personality, their social relations, and so forth. Also recognize that these balls move around within the other balls, permitting amazing

diversity of interaction potential as they are variously closer or further from the encompassing balls and are more stable or mobile in their movements. Each ball is variously perforated, often with intricate and distinctive designs, to permit us to see the balls within, as well as to permit permeable movement of influence between and among the balls. Ultimately, the collection of fretted balls is suspended in some sort of environment or context that can serve in widely variable ways to cause the balls to move, to stabilize, or otherwise reconfigure. Ultimately, each of us is represented by a set of fretted balls and as we move among diverse contexts we see the similar and dissimilar features among the sets of balls.

As a point of departure for this reconceptualization, some central definitions may help to frame constructively our approach. We define culture as a process, rather than a product, with three distinctive areas of concern: (1) it involves knowing and behaving in a manner acceptable to persons who are members of the culture; (2) developing the semantic or cognitive framework to facilitate appropriate knowledge and behavior; and (3) transmitting and perpetuating this knowledge, framework, and behavior. Thus the process of culture embraces behavioral, cognitive, and social concerns. We also define communication as a process of symbolically eliciting meaningful responses, which facilitate understanding and/or fulfillment of other purposes. Although important, intention is not a definitional aspect of communication, because any of us may be “giving off” information about our selves whenever we are the object of attention, whether we intend to “give” that information or not (Cf. Goffman, 1959 ; Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). Intercultural communication then becomes the process of generating or negotiating a shared sense of social reality in which people of different cultural

perspectives attempt to create sufficient rapport to facilitate understanding and/or fulfillment of other purposes.

The study of intercultural communication is perhaps one of the most expansive and varied of all areas of human study. The International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies (IAICS) represents a forum of voices from the multitude of possibilities. This is at once a source of our strength, but is also a source of weakness if our efforts are not integrated in some fashion. The value of this comprehensive perspective is to organize our thinking, to determine how and where what we do individually fits within our system, and to use this collective effort to locate those questions we need to address. Perhaps most importantly, thinking so broadly will help us recognize that nothing we do is isolated from the work of others and trying to maximize the potential of our work requires us to collaborate ever more effectively. What follows is a brief consideration of the first five dimensions, a more detailed consideration of the sixth dimension, and a final projection of the potential of this approach for IAICS.

Physicality

As with each of our six dimensions, the central questions for this section are what is involved and how does physicality relate on the one hand to culture and to human communication on the other? For physicality, the inherent notion of “physiology” demands explanation and qualification. The common meaning of “physiology” is “the organic processes or functions in an organism or in any of its parts” (Random House Dictionary, 1966). Obviously this area of study is the foundation of all biological and medical sciences. Those of us who focus our attention on the behavioral manifestations

of prior physiological conditions are likely to lose some of the distinctive contributions of this area, as they become blurred in the interrelationship with psychological and sociological aspects of our behavior. Therefore, this area of physicality is treated independent of personality artificially and heuristically in order to call attention to some questions and variables from biological sciences which may get neglected or unwisely subsumed under more general psychological notions.

To treat the area of physicality independently involves some assumptions regarding homo sapiens. First, the species significant characteristic for homo sapiens is assumed to be a chemical compound, perhaps related to DNA or RNA. Second, outgrowths or developments of this chemical lead to neurological development necessary for those aspects of homo sapiens often thought to be species significant, namely, our symbolic ability and abstract reasoning, among others. Third, members of our species are genetically unique, generally similar, and follow varied development, which fosters differential cultivation of genetic potential. The variation of our species over time may be attributable to environmental demands, such as diet and climate, and results in varied features such as differential stature, pigmentation, gait, and other variables. Fourth, this variation of development leads to varied patterns of perception, reasoning, and other more observable behavioral patterns as the sensorium differs according to these patterns and their usage. Finally, we can reasonably assume that evolution and selectivity operate at the physical level over time and therefore contribute to this varied development.

The resulting patterns of this varied development create a reciprocal relationship between physiology and culture. Depending on the relative isolation of the group, this relationship may be modal or configurational. Whatever the patterned tendency, the

result is some physiological commonality that influences the development of culture. For example, similarity of stature may lead to commonality of living quarters, similarity of gait may lead to concepts of mobility, skin pigmentation may lead to conceptions of what a god looks like, and other similar physiological patterns may lead to a widely varied development of myths and myth structures. As in most cases we can locate exceptions, but patterned physiological tendencies do become foundational elements of cultural features. Conversely, culture can also lead to physiological patterns. Consider, for example, how the use of drugs and other chemicals can alter our life style and corresponding physiological tendencies; antibiotics, artificial sweeteners, illegal drugs, and other chemicals can have invasive consequences for our development. Similarly, more socially derived conditions can also affect our physiological development; consider, for example, pollution, sun bathing, dieting, birthing, and child feeding techniques.

These physiologically based cultural patterns do, in turn, influence our actual communication behaviors. Examples abound in several major areas of contemporary research, such as neural linguistics, sociobiology, and communibiology. The most recent research in communibiology reports the physiological foundations of many communication behaviors. Consider some examples from these lines of research as they directly effect communication variables: Our labeling and abstracting, our grammatical functions of language, and our varied use of speech and language reveal the operations of our physiologically based perceptions, reasoning, and symbolic activities. As the work of Walter Ong (1967), Marshal McLuhan (1964), and their many followers reveal, our media capabilities are strongly influenced by receptions in our sensorium. How we

conceive of the person will seriously impact our self-perceptions, as well as our interpersonal relations. Consider the recent discussions of whether stereotyping may have physiological roots in our defensive reactions to differences among people (Wartik, 2004). Many other examples abound, but these will suffice as illustrations of the fundamental relations among physicality, culture, and communication. We might debate for many years exactly what these relations are, how they should be weighted, and exactly how they impact our specific behaviors, but we know the relations are there. Ours is the task to sort and sift the evidence and determine what questions deserve our attention. Regardless of the answers, a lot of work by members of IAICS has linkages to physicality, and these connections should be acknowledged and expanded to create the total mosaic of intercultural relations.

Personality

The progression from the core dimension of physicality to the next dimension of personality raises several questions that have long troubled the behavioral and social sciences. Essentially, can concepts and principles in these broader dimensions be explained in terms of more core concepts? Labeled “reductionism” by philosophers of social science, the varied positions on this topic fit on a continuum ranging from a strict reductionism on one end to an anti-reduction position anchoring the other end. The latter argument would conclude that some concepts and principles relating them are distinctive to the more encompassing dimension and cannot be explained by reduction to more basic ingredients. The ultimate resolution of these questions will depend on the advancement of our knowledge, but meanwhile this paper presumes a middle ground between the

anchors, a flexible position reflected in the perforations and movement of the fretted balls of our over-arching model. To wit, some aspects of homo sapiens we might label personality cannot be reduced to physical components, and yet, others may now or at some point in time be so reduced; the parallel of this position extends to sociality and politicality as well. The final two dimensions symbolicity and spirituality serve to integrate and synthesize the other dimensions, thus constraining the applicability of questions about reductionism in their regard.

The notion of personality demands some basic explanation and qualification. Drawing upon the common denotation, “personality” may be defined as the “sum total of the mental, emotional, and social characteristics of an individual; . . . the organized patterns of behavioral characteristics of the individual” (Random House, 1966). As with the other dimensions, personality is treated independently of its closest neighbors, physicality and sociality, only in an artificial and heuristic fashion. Ultimately and realistically these three dimensions are interdependent and feed each other directly and indirectly. The origins of personality are found in the unique development of the person within its physical and social context. The physical and physiological contexts frame the self-environmental connection that leads to varied influences in development. Similarly the social context adds concomitant influence on the emergent self-concept and self-other relationships. As the child progresses it learns about the relative value of the pieces of influence and its relative status and roles in the social system of which it is becoming a part. Granted, this statement overly simplifies the personality and recognizes the potential of subsequent social changes, these emergent characteristics certainly constitute the formative aspects of one’s personality.

Many basic textbooks in the discipline of psychology identify the host of ingredients that variously comprise one's personality. Consider a few of the possible ingredients: The development of perceptual patterns is central to our personality, and these perceptions form the foundation of selectivity patterns that lead to how we subsequently perceive, interpret, and respond to our world. From this basis numerous authors have addressed how we form and change impressions, how these impressions develop into cognitive structures or constructs, and how these are variously influenced by interaction patterns with other members of our society. Less precisely behavioral, but certainly influential, is the assignment of relative values to our emergent attitudes, beliefs, and other predispositions. These values permeate the resulting frame of reference, a unique endgame of our cognitive and behavioral inclinations. As our next dimension will address, out of these learned tendencies we come to appreciate our social groups as a source of protection, both defensive and supportive. Close examination of these collective personality features reveals the rudiments of our reasoning processes and worldview. Lest we forget, however, many of these aspects and their tendencies emerge from inherent physiological conditions and become operational only in the social context.

One of the most provocative treatments of how personality and culture are reciprocally related comes from a classic work by Anthony F. C. Wallace. His Culture and Personality (1961) builds simplistically on the number of individuals involved and the number of behavioral categories to create a grid-work that moves from a simple habit or response by one person to a modal configuration of personality types that constitute the basic cultural framework of a people. Within the development of his position emerges a central concept that relates personality at the individual level to culture,

namely, the concept of “mazeway.” Summarizing his position, mazeway may be compared to a map of a gigantic maze with an elaborate key or legend and many insets. The three primary sets of ingredients are (1) the goals or values we might seek, (2) the objects, including self, that we will encounter, and (3) the techniques or ways to manipulate objects to realize end states. Whereas these elements may be combined in an almost infinite variety of imagined sequences, to the individual all of these phenomena normally constitute one integrated dynamic system of perceptual assemblages or a cultural framework. As Wallace presents his position, he relates this broadened concept to most areas that touch in one way or another with the dimension of personality.

Personality based cultural patterns are also reciprocally related to communication behaviors. Consider, for example, the implications on our symbol and code systems of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis for perceptual patterns (Whorf, 1957), the work of Basil Bernstein for socio-economic class behaviors (1964), and the relevance of various other information-processing positions. Regarding the communication channels and media, notice the further relevance of work by Walter Ong and Marshal McLuhan for the function of our sensorium and the implications of media violence, transportation speed, and computerization for our children as compared to the older generations. The communication source and receiver relationships help create self-concept, self-esteem, self-disclosure patterns, identity formation, as well as our general social attitudes toward interpersonal communication tactics and strategies. Our individual personality and the modal personality reflective of culture and sub-cultures directly effect our development, adaptation, and transmission of messages. Collectively, personality based cultural patterns in one way or another impact directly or indirectly on all parts of the

communication process.

Sociality

The so-called “herding instinct” of humans reflects a basic tendency to form groups in order to facilitate survival. Sociality addresses this social nature or tendency to group and includes the actions on the part of individuals to associate together for varied purposes. The central problem with this dimension is its relationship with the word “society,” a term that encompasses the products of sociality, as well as politicality. When we use the word “society” it will be in this dual sense, referring to both the formation into groups or the broader collections of groups into organizations and institutions. This third dimension of the human condition is treated independently of physicality, personality, and politicality in an artificial and heuristic fashion, as, once again, this fretted ball is strongly influenced by its core and encompassing dimensions. Whether sociality can be reduced to the personality and physicality elements is unclear, but it certainly has clear roots in our gregariousness, tendencies to empathize, and the defensive networks we establish for our survival. The environment in which the individual develops leads to specific group functions as it mediates the personality and social tendencies. As groups form and evolve, they assume distinctive features that emanate from the development of social norms, power structures, leadership needs, and the status and role systems. These and many other group phenomena reinforce the crucial nature of sociality and point to politicality where inter-group relations form some of the grandest structures in government and religious organizations.

Whereas society and culture in general conversation are more obviously related,

the exact relationship is confusing for no other reason than the dual use of the word “society” in reference to groups emerging from sociality and inter-group developments emerging from politicality. For the immediate purposes, if we refer to society as a product of group development, then the relationship is more clearly part to whole, as culture would be a broader set of concerns comprised of diverse intra-cultural groups and groupings. Even so, this simplistic conception is in reality far more complicated as groups may overlap cultural boundaries, may comprise sub- or co-cultures within or across cultural boundaries, and may fuzzy up the reciprocity among these socio-cultural components in confusing patterns. Regardless of the somewhat imprecise conceptualization of society and culture and the highly variable representation of these phenomena in real situations, one is not possible without the other; both are inextricably tied to the interaction patterns of people and form matrices of interaction responsibilities. If we look to its core neighbor personality, rather than to its broader more encompassing potential, we can manage it more reasonably. As Wallace’ s personality grid revealed, we can allow anyone of these human dimensions to expand and incrementally morph into a perspective about culture. If, however, we focus on the distinctiveness we can heuristically perceive the relative independence of each dimension, as well as its interaction with the other dimensions.

Socially based cultural patterns are reciprocally related to communication patterns and behaviors. As a point of departure, whenever sociality and society exist, communication is a concomitant, if not a sine qua non. In fact the symbolic interactionists suggest that society is a communication matrix, i.e., a pattern or mold that grows out of human interaction. The channels of communication constitute patterns of

dependence and interdependence that lead to roles and role systems that, in turn, form the foundation of society. As societies initially form to assist coping and survival skills, communication is the means by which decisions are reached and implemented. The intrapersonal and interpersonal communication patterns comprise the individual decision-making networks, but they also pattern to form the essentials of social norms, rules, and laws. Changes in one side of this equation will result in changes on the other side. For example, whether a society uses force, persuasion, or small groups to reach decisions, the communication patterns will similarly shift. Whether the mediated communication overwhelms the face-to-face interaction will also create change in society. These changes may be quick or slow, gradual and unnoticed or quick and alarming, but they reinforce the reciprocal relations among communication, sociality, and culture.

Beyond the broader level of communication and society as general systems, sociality manifests its influence directly on specific communication variables. Consider, for example, how jargon and dialectical variability reveal group patterns and the centrality of these socio-linguistic trends to the formation and dissolution of cultural units. Notice further how the source and receiver conception and interactions grow out of socially influenced self-concept and matters of self-esteem, and how the roles, norms, and power structures regulate communication interaction. The implications for communication channels and media are so prevalent today that they are regularly topics of conversation. Who can ignore the social dependence on media technology and the concerns for diverse social issues? Just as social groups influence our viewpoints, they further alter the function of our perceptual patterns and worldview. Message variability is also impacted, as much of what we talk about and the ways we talk about them grow

out of our social concerns, and the strategies and tactics we employ as we adapt to each other result from group norms and rules of propriety and tolerance. We all realize the dangers of social violations and the consequent punishment. Our communication behavior reflects our sensitivity, or lack thereof, to these social concerns.

Politicality

As sociality refers to the human tendency to form groups, politicality recognizes the need for inter-group relations. Parallel with the prior three dimensions of the human condition, politicality requires explanation and qualification as it is treated independently of sociality, personality, and physicality in an artificial and heuristic fashion. As indicated in the preceding section, politicality is an aspect of society broadly conceived. We define politicality as the tendencies shown in organizing or institutionalizing relations and interactions between and among groups. “Organize” refers to the actions used to form into a whole the interdependent or coordinated parts or groups. Politicality has evolved with environmental complexity as increased population, transportation efficiency, and technology generally have created social changes for mating, trade, conflict resolution, and other features of survival. The potential structure of government and religion represent the grandest achievements of social differentiation among power and role structures, as well as systems for conflict resolution, economic transactions, and military systems. The results of these political efforts are the states, religions, and countries that uniquely reflect our culture and sub-cultural systems. Just as groups develop to permit coordinated efforts that exceed the potential of any individual, political entities exist to permit coordinated efforts that exceed the potential of any single groups.

Political systems or institutions, by whatever name, and politicality are reciprocally related to culture. In Wallace's aforementioned grid, political institutions are to some extent reflections of the modal personality that, in turn, constitute the basic features of social groupings. How society relates to political systems is a matter of definition, but society or societies become at the multi-group level the components of political institutions. Perhaps the simplest way to sort these confusing relations is to point to possible ways that political systems relate to culture: The geometric options are part to whole, whole to part, concomitant, concentric, or overlapping. In fact all of these possibilities are available in the constellation of current states, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and religions. The reciprocal influence between culture and these political institutions are readily apparent when we observe that changes in either result in changes in the other.

The politically based aspects of culture are reciprocally related to communication phenomena. Consider first the symbol system, as the architecture we construct reflects the cultural interaction with political institutions, the rituals of power groups with their specialized norms and roles reveal the values assigned to such varied groupings, and the metaphors and myths associated with our religions often are inseparable from cultural phenomena. The channels and media influence strike at the heart of politics, which we might define as the system for allocation of power and scarce resources. Through the media we conduct campaigns to assume power and secure the resources. Social power reveals further the conception of source and receiver as the political units work to preserve the integrity or suppress the individuality of their members, individually or as groups. For example, the individual-collective distinction drawn for cultural

differentiation is directly and indirectly reflected in the host governments and religions. Finally, message variability, both in content and in form, reflect the political features of our culture. The diverse coalitions will influence the basic arguments used, and the strategies and tactics for preservation of power will impact the acceptable modes of interaction. Compare the use of education, persuasion, and force among political institutions as indicators of cultural patterns. In his classic work The Symbolic Uses of Politics, Murray Edelman urged political scientists to reconsider many of the symbolic and other communication aspects of politics and political institutions (1964; also see 1971).

Symbolicity

The symbol-using capacity of the human being is often considered a species identifier that distinguishes us from the other creatures in our world. We use symbols to label and organize the diverse world we occupy, and socially we use symbols to communicate with others for coping with this diverse world. We develop our symbols into systematic sets we call languages, both verbal and non-verbal. Essentially all languages have four components: the symbols, such as sounds and gestures, that signify phenomena in our world; the categories of symbols, such as nouns and verbs, that permit us to differentiate objects from actions and other relationships among the worldly phenomena; the logic, such as verbal syntax, that permits us to make reasonable statements about how the symbolic categories and phenomena within them may relate to each other, and the idiomatic and creative deviation from our language rules that allow us to expand our language and creatively deal with the diversity of our world. The origins

of our symbolicity are deeply woven into the four prior dimensions of the human condition, as our symbol-producing capacity is rooted in the chemical and neurological aspects of our physicality, the psychological uses of symbols so central to our emergent personalities and world organization system, and the social uses that grow out of our sociality and politicality. The broadest level of spirituality builds upon the integration of the prior dimensions through symbolicity.

Symbolicity and culture are at least reciprocally related, if not, according to some authors, indistinguishable. To anthropologist Edward T. Hall culture is communication and vice versa (1959); to anthropological linguist Dell Hymes communication processes provide a comprehensive entry point for the discovery of culture (1964). If we wish to approach culture as a symbolic process, then we can draw upon the work of a broad spectrum of research to reinforce our perspective. Semanticists and the recent derivative of cultural studies demonstrate how all aspects of reality grow from our symbolic constructions and the interpretation/application of them. The grammarians provide us a structural framework from both the logic and psycho-logic of language. The studies of metaphor, myth, and folklore from literary scholars and anthropologists such as Levi-Strauss (1963) add features to our study of symbols that accent the potential for religiosity and spirituality. From a socio-logical perspective, such as symbolic interaction and ordinary language philosophy, we encounter symbolicity as the interaction matrix that forms the foundation of sociality and politicality. Any issue of Intercultural Communication Studies (ICS), the IAICS journal, will clearly indicate the varied relevance of symbolicity to multiple dimensions of our humanity.

Because symbols are the sine qua non of communication as we know it, we will

not pursue the parallel reciprocity between the two areas as we did with the four prior dimensions, but instead will offer a position that forms the basis for our expanded treatment of spirituality. Let us first return to our model of the Chinese fretted balls. Symbolicity represents the fifth ball within which are the preceding core dimensions. Recall that each ball is perforated with various designs reflecting the variety of learned behaviors within varied cultures. Through these perforated designs light can pass and touch any aspect of whatever is within. This transparency is crucial for symbolism that permeates all of the dimensions like the passage of light, thus potentially enabling the individual to identify, specify, and relate to all aspects of its being. In this fashion our symbol using capacity does become the gelatin that gives stability and order to the entire model. Without this lubricating and consolidating potential the fretted balls would be too loose and inaccurately reflect the stability of the human condition they are designed to indicate. To examine how this works, one need only to consider how language and its symbols serve us. As we label in different languages, we simultaneously illuminate or shade certain aspects of the phenomena we are specifying. As we link these pieces of reality we simultaneously reflect the logic or psycho-logic of how pieces of reality may be connected. As we creatively expand our perspective, we use our metaphors and myths to create new visions and stimulate our imaginations.

Spirituality

The final innate dimension of our humanity is modeled by the fretted ball that connects each of us to the broadest aspects of our world and to the preceding core dimensions. For some individuals spirituality is deeply seated in religious institutions,

but for others less interested in the political features of their spirituality this may simply entail the quest for our fit or position in the natural or metaphysical world. Wherever it may take us, this search for the meaning of life recognizes broader questions than the prior dimensions, forcing us to look outward from the most encompassing fretted ball to the ultimate source of light that integrates the many dimensions of our lives. The major professor of the senior author of this essay was someone who believed deeply in the unity of our universe whether apparently irrational or not. In truly Aristotelian fashion he sought the basic categories and analogies that might unify our world. Such a quest for the ultimate theory of knowledge certainly motivated the present study, but the model and particulars are uniquely the products of the authors, and as we turn toward spirituality we may have located the containing dimension of our humanity. We are, therefore, like the graduate students in the seminar mentioned at the outset convinced that spirituality is an essential dimension of the human condition that ultimately, both individually and socially, provides the light that enables us to see how the other dimensions of our humanity relate to each other.

Perhaps the best definition of spirituality for our use is a multifaceted conception by Ken Wilber. His first aspect of “spirituality involves the highest levels of any series of developmental lines” (1998, p. 561). For instance, the universal capacities of physicality, personality, sociality, politicality, and symbolicity each develop along a certain path or line over time in a particular human’s growth. One could almost imagine a graph where the individual lines run parallel and surpass or fall behind one another, mostly developing, sometimes into a spiritual turquoise zone. When one’s personality, for example, reaches a very high level of development (the turquoise zone) this capacity

begins to operate at a spiritual level of development. These developmental lines may be divided into pre-conventional, conventional, post-conventional, and post-post-conventional stages of development with the post-post conventional level being the spiritual. Thus, in one sense “spirituality is the sum total of the highest levels of any series of developmental lines” (1998, p. 562). One could be at the post-post-conventional level of both their sociality and politicality, and their level of spirituality would be the total of those two lines developed to the spiritual levels.

Another prospect is the potential that “spirituality is itself a separate developmental line” (1998, p. 562). As spirituality is an innate human dimension in and of itself, this capacity may unfold along its own path. This line develops as states of conscious awareness unfold. When levels of awareness begin to emerge at what Wilber calls the “transpersonal stages,” the individual approaches the spiritual levels of conscious awareness. These stages may be achieved through spiritual practices, such as meditation or prayer, and are most easily described by the work of Evelyn Underhill who “divides spirituality into three broad hierarchical stages (with numerous substages), which she calls *nature mysticism* (a lateral expansion of consciousness to embrace the stream of life), *metaphysical mysticism* (culminating in formless cessation), and *divine mysticism* (which she divides into dark night and union)” (cited in Wilber, 1998, p. 565). Each of these states transcends the previous one in depth, creating different levels of spiritual awareness within the development of one’s spirituality.

According to Wilber, spirituality may also be “an attitude (such as openness or love) that you can have” (1998, p. 565). As “probably the most popular and common definition,” this aspect does not rely upon levels or lines of development, but, rather,

describes spirituality as an emotion or realization of, for example, compassion, that a human may have toward the world or other humans. This attitude involves a transcendence of the ego or self to embrace a socio-centric or world-centric perspective in which love and openness to all peoples and the entire universe follows. Closely correlated with “spirituality as attitude” is Wilber’s idea that “spirituality basically involves peak experiences” (1998, p. 566). These peak experiences are direct apprehensions of spiritual realities and also do not develop along any lines or within specifiable stages. For example, during the states of meditation or prayer, one may realize one’s self in complete unity with the universe or God. These are temporary experiences like moving in and out of a room; they are entered and then exited by human consciousness.

Spirituality can be a mix of all or some of these aspects or definitions, a mix of developmental lines, a combination of these lines, a line unto itself, a realized attitude of love or openness, or apprehensions of peak spiritual experiences. With all of these spiritual realities, at some point it becomes necessary for the person to communicate this spirituality with other people. This is where symbolicity interacts with spirituality. As one operates from spiritual or post-post-conventional levels in their developmental lines, experiences love or openness, or has peak spiritual experiences, a new set of referents emerges, spiritual referents that can be communicated through spiritual symbols. Through the innate human capacity for symbolicity, whole vocabularies of spiritual symbols may be created to communicate between two people or within a culture of people who have the spiritual referents from their spiritual experiences. As Wilber explains: “If a Zen master says ‘Emptiness,’ and you’ve had that experience, you will

know exactly what is meant.” He adds, “Zen masters talk about Emptiness all the time! And they know exactly what they mean by the words, and the words are perfectly adequate to convey what they mean, *if* you have had the experience (for what they mean can only be disclosed in the shared praxis of zazen, or meditation practice)” (1995, p. 271). But if one has not experienced the referent to which “emptiness” refers, then this slips into the shadows of our fretted ball analogy and is lost to the spiritually inexperienced. Just like the child is unable to comprehend “as if” statements, someone who has not developed to a spiritual point in their lines of development, or has not had the spiritual experience symbolized, will not apprehend or comprehend that spiritual experience.

To grasp the relationship between spirituality and the other dimensions of our humanity, we can examine the human being within our over-arching model of fretted balls with each sphere functioning from its own level along a developmental line. A person’s physicality is, as the term suggests, the purely self or body and the physiological action the body takes. A person’s body grows and develops naturally over the course of a lifetime, but this growth is not the only development that occurs. The body’s overall health and well being may improve or diminish as an individual ingests food or engages in exercise. Physicality’s developmental line is contingent upon the level to which one nourishes one’s body and engages in physical practice, and whereas a pre-conventional level of development along this line would be the result of a disability or basic neglect of one’s body, the post-conventional level of development would be the apex of healthful nourishment and activity, wherein the body is at a maximum level of health.

The body’s nourishment and activity are heavily contingent upon the person’s

personality. Carl Jung's (1971) psychological types help us to relate spirituality to personality; it provides us with a framework within which to analyze personality and apply it to developmental lines. In Jung's system, a person deals with the world through a combination of being either introverted or extroverted, sensing or intuitive, thinking or feeling, and judging or perceptive. Sixteen personality types are possible. For example, a person can be extroverted, sensing, thinking, and judging (ESTJ) or introverted, intuitive, feeling, and perceptive (INFP), to list only two of the sixteen different personality possibilities by which an individual may use to gather and evaluate information. In this model, a person is only functional in so far as he or she integrates the opposing preferences--extroversion with introversion, thinking and feeling, and so forth. One can imagine the trouble a person would face if he or she were completely introverted; the introverted individual cannot function independently without exercising some degree of extroversion, just like a completely extroverted person would not be safe without some introverted, contemplative thought before acting. Developmentally, at a pre-conventional level, an individual's personality functions solely at one end of the spectrum for each of the four dualities—a pre-conventional ENTP would solely function with extroversion, intuition, thinking, and perception, with no inclination towards the other ways of dealing with the world. Ideally, a post-post-conventional level of personality development, within the framework of Jung's typology, would operate with all four dualities completely integrated so that there is no tendency either way: feeling tendencies would be balanced with thought, for instance, so that a person could love as well as reason when the individual interacted with the world and other people. Of course, each person is an individual in and of themselves and can never be strictly labeled or

pigeonholed, but Jung's system is a very useful tool for seeing how people own various personalities and how those personalities may be disintegrated at a pre-conventional level or fully integrated at a post-post conventional level of development, experiencing peak spiritual experiences as they engage the world.

A person brings their personality or self to a group, socially and politically. Sociality and politicality relate to spirituality in the domain of community. That the words community and communication are so similar is no coincidence. While engaging in sociality, individuals are operating with their physicality, taking in information from their environments with their personality, and communicating with other individuals through sociality. The pre-conventional level along sociality's developmental line would be a person's incapability to interact and communicate with other individuals who were engaging in sociality, while the post-conventional level would represent the human being as a complete integration into a social situation, with a mastery of communication and interaction with other individuals. As these communities are institutionalized and organized, individuals begin to communicate between different institutions and organizations as representatives of their respective groups. Wilber explains, "They exist in intricate networks of relational exchange with [concentric spheres] at the same level of structural organization" (1995, p. 91). Politicality's function is contingent upon levels of organization; this is where developmental lines become apparent. Similar to sociality, the pre-conventional level of politicality along its developmental line would find a group unable to integrate into an institution or organization. On the other hand, an individual functioning at a post-conventional level of development within this sphere of politicality would fully organize, institutionalize, and integrate into a community, and thus the

person or group would represent the organization or institution effectively at a level of communication and interaction with other representatives.

Nearly all people interact primarily in the final two spheres of symbolicity and spirituality that facilitate interaction like a binding social and political force. These spheres provide a sea of mind and spirit in which all people, physically, personally, socially and politically, swim. Wilber calls this the “noosphere,” the realm of socio-cultural reality. This reality includes “. . . symbols and tools that both [create] and [depend] upon new levels of social holons in which the users of symbols and tools . . . exist and reproduce themselves, but the reproduction [is] now the reproduction of culture through symbolic communication and not just the reproduction of bodies through sexuality. Kinship [gives] way to ‘cultureship’ . . .” (1995, p. 100). Culture is formed using the universal function of symbolicity. Humans create a mental reality, an environment in which they are free to engage in sociality and politicality, using their physicality and personality. As frequently suggested, people are like fish, swimming in the cultural waters of symbolicity, i.e., Wilber’s “noosphere” that includes transcendent spirituality. As spirituality is the transcendent, or post-post-conventional, aspect of all levels of development and also includes love and openness, love and spirituality is shared between people as they reside in the noosphere. Not only can people transcend themselves and share love, they can communicate these experiences with one another through symbolicity in a culture of shared experience.

When one says to another, “I love you,” love is between the two people, transcending each person and “flowing” between each one in the noosphere. Here we see symbolicity and spirituality’s symbiotic relationship in intercultural communication. As

intercultural communication is people, representing various cultures, communicating and overcoming their cultural differences, symbolicity and spirituality are the facilitating factors in this process. Through symbolicity, two people communicate, and through spirituality, people may transcend themselves and connect with others through openness and love. The two cultural representatives are free to interact and engage each other, communicating interculturally, overcoming their differences, through shared symbolicity and love for one another. In this fashion Wilber's noosphere and the better known concept of community become the vehicles for a better synchronized and harmonious world.

Conclusions and Projections

Originating many years ago, the central message of this paper is a set of six interrelated and interdependent dimensions common to all people: physicality, personality, sociality, politicality, symbolicity, and spirituality. Over the last thirty to forty years, a rapidly expanding literature has encouraged us to reconfigure our study of human behavior around this less contaminated set of universal characteristics. Many scholars bemoan the constraints experienced as their questions fall into the breach between and among the established domains of our educational system. The value of this alternative results from shaking up the traditional categories and returning to the basics of our humanity (cf. Koestler, 1964). The study of intercultural communication is a remarkably propitious point of departure to launch this re-orientation. Our host organization IAICS and its journal provide us an opportunity to pursue the potential of this vision. As we consider our fellow members and contributors, we discover specialists

in all of these dimensions, and our conversations continually address the interaction about the dimensions from diverse cultural vantage points. What remain for this paper are some suggestions about how to realize the potential of this invigorating vision.

One way to align our work consonant with this vision is through our journal and related publications. The articles printed in each issue of ICS consider a wide variety of topics that are often merely fragments of the proposed system. What if we developed a set of basic questions and asked each author to address the relevant questions in a projection section at the end of the article? These questions would seek the author's identification of how the topic relates to this alternative system, what contribution does the article potentially make to what dimension, and what are the implications for the relationship between or among the dimensions? We should restrict the length of this response to no more than five hundred words, but even such a short commentary would invite the authors to fit their work into a shared perspective. At the end of each volume one of the editorial board could synthesize these short commentaries to a reflection of where we are and where we see gaps for the expansion of our collective vision.

Now that we are moving toward annual meetings of IAICS we could also use our conferences to synthesize our work more effectively. One way would be to set up panels of papers around these dimensions and to create dialogue sessions that consider the implications of our current work for the future advancement of our vision. Even a quick examination of our work indicates a predominant emphasis on symbolicity, but more careful study of our work indicates serious questions that are beneath the surface of our topic about the relation of this work to other dimensions of our humanity. What is most likely is that we simply have not considered more completely the implications of our

work. Because we can so easily read the results of our work in the journal, I would like to see us talk much more at our conferences about the implications of our work.

Sometimes the missing key to unlock far greater potential of our work can come from someone who is far removed from our specialty and yet who shares our broader vision.

We need, therefore, to re-examine the potential of our annual meetings.

Perhaps the most important concern addressed by this paper is largely implicit. Despite the amazing proliferation of research and publications about human behavior we continue to constrain rather than expand our potential. As disciplines compete at universities for scarce resources they build and solidify their base of success at the expense of greater enlightenment and vision. The breadth necessary to address intercultural communication study compels us to escape those constraints. Because so many of us can recount unfortunate experiences that have reduced our initiative and momentum, we seriously wish that we could wave a wand and terminate these counterproductive developments of a political sort, but we cannot. What we can do is follow the advice of the mariners in Booker T. Washington's famous Atlanta Exposition Address in the nineteenth century: "Cast down your bucket where you are" (1895/1954, p. 462) and thereby gain the sustenance we need for the future. Let us use this occasion to launch an alternative perspective framed around the distinctive features of our humanity. Let us use IAICS and its journal and conferences to re-envision a more promising future for world community through better intercultural communication.

*Revised and expanded version of a paper presented at the annual conference of the International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies, Guadalajara, Mexico, July 15, 2004.

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